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Advent Christian
WITNESS

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January/February 1995

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An interview with an Advent Christian pastor in mainland China

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Advent Christian WITNESS

Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy, Timothy Setzer, Linda Leavitt**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria



CONFLICT OR HEALING?

IN A RECENT *Prime Time Live* interview, ABC correspondent Diane Sawyer asked Billy Graham, "If you could wave your hand and make one problem in this world go away, what would that be?" Without hesitation, Dr. Graham answered, "Racial division and strife."

His response reflects a reality that most Americans, Christians included, are uncomfortable with. Despite the accomplishments of the civil rights movement, racism remains alive and well and the issues surrounding race relations continue to grow more complex and urgent. And as the United States becomes a more diverse society with a variety of racial and ethnic groups, what will our future look like? Will we become a society marked by racial and ethnic division and scarred by violence and hatred?

I fear the answer is yes, unless Christians like you and I take the lead in breaking down racial hostility. That's beginning to happen in some places, but unfortunately racism and issues relating to it remain low on the list of priorities of many evangelical congregations and organizations. And we're comfortable with that because we don't understand the serious consequences that racial and ethnic hatred have for societies that tolerate and encourage them.

To see those consequences, look at the Eastern European conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Five hundred years of ethnic hatred have brought the Serbs, Croats, and Bosnian Muslims to the point where they're willing to destroy their societies and exterminate people in the name of ethnic cleansing. If we ignore the growing racism and racial division in our country, our future could look frighteningly similar.

No second-class citizens

Evangelicals, especially those of us who are of European-American ancestry, need a fresh understanding of what the Scriptures teach about the value and worth of all human beings. Early in Genesis, we're taught that despite the distortion of sin, human beings are valuable in God's eyes. In John's gospel, Jesus gives us a clear demonstration of his love for an ethnic group despised by his own people. When the Master chose to walk through Samaria and share a drink of water with a Samaritan woman, he focused not only on the forgiveness of sin but on reminding us that there are no second-class citizens in his eyes.

Those of us who follow Jesus need to see others, especially those with different skin-color and those from different cultural backgrounds, as God sees them. Racism, anti-Semitism, and any ideology or philosophy that reduces groups of people to second-class status are sinful. When Jesus commanded us to make disciples, he challenged us to communicate God's love to all the ethnic people groups of the world. And in Revelation 7, John describes God's kingdom as "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language" (Revelation 7:9). God's kingdom will be multiethnic.

Reconciliation begins with us

Like Billy Graham, I wish that with a wave of the hand, we could eliminate racial strife and hatred. But the wounds and mistrust are so deep that healing and reconciliation will not come without a lot of hard work on the part of Christians. That work starts with each of us examining our own racial attitudes and asking God's forgiveness when our beliefs and actions do not reflect his love for all people, no matter what the color of their skin. And that work for me as a white evangelical means that I take seriously the concerns of my fellow African-American, Hispanic, and Asian Christians.

Several years ago, Congress set aside the third Monday of January to honor Dr. Martin Luther King. Around that day, I try to take time to read at least one article written by Dr. King and reflect on its significance. And each time I read the

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MY HARDSHIP IS SMALL

An Interview with Advent Christian pastor Peter Yee

Peter Yee is an Advent Christian pastor in mainland China. His father, who was also an Advent Christian pastor, studied at Aurora College in the 1920s. Recently, Steven Lay, missionary to Japan, had the opportunity to meet Rev. Yee and talk with him about his life. With the help of an interpreter, he obtained the following story:*

Rev. Yee, your father and your grandfather were also pastors. Can you tell me something of their experiences during the war?

I was four years old at the time, so I only know what my father has told me. We lived in Nanjing, the capital city of China. As the Japanese troops advanced toward the city, many Chinese people came to the city as refugees. We had a large house, and my parents began to help many of the refugees. When the Japanese troops finally captured Nanjing, they were angry with my father for helping the refugees. They arrested him and made him stand in front of a firing squad. But when the soldiers fired their guns at him, an amazing thing happened. None of the bullets hit him. I thank God for saving my father's life.

What happened after the war?

After the war, my father taught at a Bible school and helped to train pastors. Many churches were started, and some of them became quite large. For a while, the communists allowed the people to meet openly in the churches. But later, they closed the church building and people had to meet secretly in their homes.

Was it difficult during the Cultural Revolution in 1966-1969?

Yes, it was. There was a lot of persecution of the Christians. Many of them had to flee the city. And the ones who remained were scattered about. But this didn't deter my father. He continued to tell people about Jesus. He continued to teach about the Bible.

Was your father ever imprisoned?

No, he was never jailed. But he was subject to "house arrest" for several years. In the summer of 1976, the Communist Government in Nanjing became very angry with my father for preaching and teaching about the Bible. But the police decided not to put him in jail. My father had trouble with his legs. Because he was very old, they thought he would die soon anyway. Since I had been helping my father, they arrested me instead.

What crime were you charged with?

I was never charged with any specific crime. But they told me that my way of thinking was wrong, and I must be "re-educated." Day after day, they interrogated me. At first I tried to answer their questions as honestly and directly as I could. But they didn't like my answers. They said that I must renounce my belief in God. I must promise to stop telling other people

**This is not his real name. He requested that we use a pseudonym if we published his story, as he was concerned for the safety of his family.*

about Jesus. But I told them I would not stop.

When you refused to renounce the Lord, what happened?

They beat me many times. Sometimes they would knock me to the ground and kick me. Later, I just stopped answering their questions. But they didn't like that either.

Please tell me about the prison. Did your family or other Christians visit you?

No. I was kept in solitary confinement. Later I learned that my father had come regularly to the prison to see me. But they would not let him in. I had no visitors, and I couldn't receive or send any messages. Many of the other prisoners were kept two or three in a cell and even old men were forced to do hard labor. But they kept me alone in my cell. They just wanted me to think. I wasn't allowed to talk with the other prisoners either. If I tried to communicate by tapping on the wall of the cell, the guards would be very hard on me. No one spoke to me, even when they brought my food.

What was the food like?

The food was poor, and there was very little of it. I was always hungry.

How large was your prison cell?

My prison cell was about two meters wide by two meters long. There was one small window up high on the wall. I was seldom allowed to go outside to exercise or get fresh air. The floor on one side was dirt and the other side was cement. They gave me no mat for sleeping, so I slept on the cement. The dirt was too cold and damp.

How long did it continue like this?

It continued this way for about two years.

They kept you in solitary confinement for two years?

Yes. Then later they began to treat me a little better. Finally, after two

Keeping the Globe in Balance

Jim Reapsome

TALK ABOUT the unthinkable—people in Russia and China are pushing and shoving to get their hands on shares of stock. Despite warnings about shady dealers and the possibility of plunging share prices, they keep betting their money on the stock market because it looks like the fastest way to get rich.

The pandemonium in Moscow and Shanghai reminds me of stories missionaries used to tell. They would come back and excite us with tales of "native" (or "heathen") crowds begging to hear about Jesus. I can still see their virtually naked bodies, upward turned (usually black) faces, and outstretched arms. (That's how we used to knock each other over during the peanut scramble at our Sunday school picnic.) Yes, the "harvest fields" were ripe with people eager to be saved, and we answered their cries with more money and more missionaries.

But then some other stories leaked out. Those nasty anthropologists (and novelists like James Michener in *Hawaii*) told us we shouldn't do things like that. We were destroying native cultures. The people really didn't want to become Christians; they wanted to be left alone. No matter that, among other things, some sacrificed their own children. I remember learning in school that there was no universal standard of right and wrong. What right did Christians have imposing their standards on other people?

Other missionaries told different stories and found support much harder to get. People they worked with were not eager to hear the gospel. In fact, if you witnessed or preached too aggressively, you might be kicked out, thrown in jail, or killed. Thus we developed a whole scheme of missionary work among "resistant" people, which was a hard concept to sell.

Each generation must form its own impression of the "mission field." (I put the words in quotes, because "mission" and "missionary" are suspect and even rejected by some who claim to be Christians.) Today's popular image is far removed from people crying for salvation. It's far more accurate, we are told, to see "the field" as largely hostile or indifferent to foreigners. At the least, the people "over there" don't think white Americans have anything valuable to contribute.

Under impressions like that, missionary interest and passion melt like an ice cream cone in July. The question is, Do we need begging throngs of unsaved people to justify world missions? Absolutely not. Yes, Jesus appealed for workers because the fields were ripe. But he also talked about fields that produced no fruit. The field he worked killed him. He knew the people in it would do that, but he appealed, pleaded, and wept for them to repent up to the last hour. He refused to quit. His obedience to his Father did not depend on huge crowds of repentant sinners.

But in fairness to the generation of young people and new Christians coming along, we do need stories about people in other countries who do plead for American Christians to come and help them. We are needed and wanted, but today's stories must be set in a slightly different context. They must not show Americans as triumphant world saviors. They must show them as praying, bleeding, persevering servants pulling their share of the load. They must show them linked with churches all over the world in the great unfinished tasks of evangelism and discipleship. How encour-

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years and four months in prison, I was released.

What sustained you through day after day of interrogation and month after month of isolation in your cell?

I knew I had done nothing wrong. And I knew my father had done nothing wrong. It was not wrong for us to believe in God. It was not wrong to tell others about Jesus. I knew I was innocent of any crime.

Did you have a Bible with you?

No, I didn't. They wouldn't let me have one. But as a young man in my father's Bible school, I had memorized many verses in the Bible. When I was in prison, I repeated those verses over and over in my mind. And I remembered the Christian songs I had learned. The prison guards would not let me sing out loud, but they could not stop me from singing in my heart.

After you were released from prison, what happened?

Of course, I rejoiced to see my family again. Since my father's health was not good, I began to take over his pastoral responsibilities. We started having worship services in our home again. Before long we had about 300 people coming regularly to our meetings. Sometimes we had more than 1000 come to special meetings.

Praise the Lord! That must have been wonderful.

Yes it was. But it also caused problems for us. The city authorities found out about the meetings and began to send two people each week to monitor what we were doing. These government representatives often stood at the front of the room and spoke against the church. They told the people they were foolish to believe in God. But the people still came. So the government took our house away from us and we no longer had a place to meet.

What did you do?

Because of the strict controls of the city government, we decided to move our meetings out of the city. A Christian lady donated some land and we were able to construct a church building. Since then our attendance has increased greatly. There are now more than 800 people attending the church. In addition to the main church, we have also started worship services in six homes. Altogether, we have more than 3,000 members.

How many pastors are working with you?

I am the only pastor who has had any Bible school training, but there are four lay people who assist me.

Please tell me about your family.

I have a wife and two sons. They are all Christians and are very active in the church. My older son spends all his time helping in the church work. My younger son has a regular paying job, and he helps to support the rest of us financially.

> They said that I must renounce my belief in God. I must promise to stop telling other people about Jesus. But I told them I would not stop.

I understand your father was 96 years old when he died in 1982. Do you have any special memory of him that you would like to share with us?

My father was a wonderful example to me. He really modeled his life after Jesus. His heart was so full of love. Before he died he told me that the most important thing in life is to follow the Lord Jesus. "Don't remember the bad things you have experienced," he said. "Don't be angry at the people who have hurt you. We must forgive them with the love that Jesus gives to us."

Pastor Yee, I can tell that Jesus has given you the strength to do what your father said.

I am not angry. The little hardship I have suffered is small compared to what Jesus and others have faced.

The people in other countries will be interested to hear of your life and ministry in China. They will want to pray for you. Please tell us how we should pray.

It is difficult for us to obtain Bibles and biblical reference books. Only about half of our members have their own Bible, and even the leaders don't have many reference books. Please pray for the Christians who are smuggling Bibles to the underground churches in China. Also pray that we will be able to find larger buildings to rent for our meetings. Finally, pray that we will be strong in the Lord. Finances are always a problem because the people are very poor and many are without jobs.

You can be sure that our prayers will go with you as you return to China.

A personal note from Steven Lay: "After the interview, Pastor Yee and I took a walk together without the interpreter. As we walked along, he began to hum a tune. After a while I recognized the tune as a song that I knew. So I began to hum with him. Before long we were walking down the street singing together in full voice. He sang in Mandarin Chinese and I sang in English. The song we sang is one of the songs that he had sung in his heart when he was in prison: 'What a Friend We Have in Jesus.' As we walked along, tears rolled down my cheeks as I reflected on the life of the man beside me who truly knew the meaning of having Jesus as his friend."

BUS 9 TO PARADISE

Wilsey McKnight
Highland, Tex.

LEO BUSCAGLIA was at a Melbourne, Australia, bus stop when he saw the sign. "Bus 9 to Paradise." Mr. Buscaglia did not take that bus, but he later gave that title to one of his books. There he writes, "There is no need to seek paradise in some far-off future. The more passionately we love many things, the closer we come to living our paradise *now*...Life is paradise for those who love many things with a passion."

I will not go so far as to say that *paradise* can be found in this wicked and sinful world, but we can make this world a better place in which to live, both for ourselves and others. We often hear the saying, "Today is the first day of the rest of your life." Unfortunately, we take into each new day all of the excess baggage we have been carrying around for many days, maybe for many years.

The apostle Paul mentioned, more than once, some of this unwanted baggage that he attributed to the "old self" (NIV) or "old man" (KJV). Paul listed these most unChrist-like attributes: sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambitions, dissension, factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, bitterness, anger, brawling, slander, malice, greed, obscenity, foolish talk, coarse joking, lying, etc." To this he adds, "Those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:22).

Mr. Buscaglia suggests that life can be a joy by having a passion for loving, joy, self-respect, dignity, giving, learning, empathy, and so on. Surely he is right. But Paul goes further, by asking us to "put on the new self (new man)" with its love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, and forgiveness.

The above sounds good and is worthy advice. However, the human mind, emotions, and body are most reluctant to change. In psychology, this resistance to change is called "homeostasis." We make all kinds of resolutions but find it difficult to carry them out. Some do succeed, like our daughter-in-law. I admire her. She was a cigarette smoker for 27 years. Then she decided that she did not want to die from either lung cancer or heart disease, so she threw away her cigarettes and has not touched one since. After quitting the use of tobacco, the body will heal itself from the damage done by nicotine within about five years.

However, most people need help in order to "turn over a new leaf." They wish to change their lives for the better but they cannot do it by themselves. Let me suggest three areas where help is available.

1) Jesus said to Nicodemus: "*You must be born again.* The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (John 3:7-8). In essence, in putting off the "old man" and putting on the "new man," we become a new person. Our identity is in Jesus Christ.

2) The apostle Paul said "*Live by the Spirit,* and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Galatians 5:16).

3) The question then becomes, how is one to be born again by the Spirit, or even live by the Spirit? I suggest that it is only possible through prayer. Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given to you." Again, he said, "...ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you" (Matthew 7:7).

Some people have conversion experiences in which the change is sudden and dramatic. But with the rest of us, change comes gradually. Look back over your life and notice the dramatic change. That has happened even though it may have taken many years for the Lord to bring it about. But whether sudden or gradual our goal must be to become like Jesus Christ as much as is possible within this earthly body. Then we can say the same as the apostle Paul, "Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day-and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8). ❑

Veteran Advent Christian pastor Wilsey McKnight is a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and currently lives in Highland Village, Texas.

Is your child's School a Sound, Moral Environment?

(and what to do if it isn't)

Cheryl Harris
Mechanic Falls, Me.

MANY CHRISTIAN parents can not afford to home school their children or send them to private schools. Even if they could afford either of these options, many parents choose not to because of disadvantages or difficulties involved. How can they make sure their children get a good education in the public schools *and* learn the Christian values they want their children to apply?

Schools, like the rest of society, are responsible for providing a sound, moral environment open to questions. Schools can and should serve as model societies. This is an exaggerated expectation from a society that is immoral; for schools are no more than a reflection of the society in which they sit. Nevertheless, it is their responsibility to model correct and acceptable behavior and to require such of students.

When I was in high school I edited my school newspaper. The language I heard in the hallways and classrooms appalled me, so I wrote an editorial about it. I got more feedback, mostly negative, from that one article than any other all year. For some reason, swearing and cursing were considered part of freedom of speech. I had been raised to believe they were rude and impolite.

Why should parents worry?

As a college student, I was required to attend many different classes, lectures, and seminars of values and philosophies. One such requirement for my degree was a seminar for Project Wild, an environmental education and conservation program. The seminar started in a darkened room where we were told to set all of our things aside and focus on the tape being played. I knew when it started it was a subliminal message relaxation tape. I was willing to try to listen until I became a water molecule moving downstream when I was supposed to be a human sitting on the riverbank. At that point I shut the tape out and asked God to protect me. The entire conference portrayed that: wildlife has spiritual value; people find peace and inspiration in nature; and humans are no more valuable than wildlife.

As an adult, I was capable of discerning these values, with which I disagreed. I could then choose not to listen to or believe them. One concern I prayed about, though, is that many of my fellow students believed that they were "taught" and will teach it to children. The problem with that is that children "assimilate moral codes, as plants do liquid, by osmosis. What goes on around them becomes a part of them every day and stays with them..." Children don't objectively choose values. They absorb the ones that seem right to them and their childish emotions.

What are parents' rights?

John and Ruth sent their daughter to a private school when she started using bad language that she learned at school. They told me they didn't say anything to anyone at school be-

cause they felt they would be wasting their time. I tried to urge them to fight, take it to the school board if necessary, but they didn't want to try. For any in the same position, parents have specific rights regarding their child's education.

Both schools and parents should respect the rights of the parents regarding their children. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the United Nations charter declares that: "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given their children." Parents have the right and they have the power. The taxes they pay finance schools and their votes elect school board members. Parents may also complain to the school board when school officials fail to respect their choices regarding their child's education.

There are specific rights guaranteed to parents. The National Committee for Citizens in Education, a group that works to preserve parents' rights includes among those rights, the rights:

- to see instructional materials used in federally funded programs.
- in most states, to visit a child's classroom(s) at any time during the day, provided the parent first notifies the school office.
- in most states, to request that a child be excused from school activities that parents object to on religious, moral, or other reasonable grounds.

The Hatch Amendment passed on November 1, 1976, established some specific rights of students to be protected from psychological or experimental programs.

What are parents' responsibilities?

Parents' rights to play a role in the education of their children also give them the responsibility to pursue such a role. Parents are responsible for moral education even more than schools are. This involves more than "do what I say, not what I do." Parents must learn to do more than just "declare their own opinions in the hope that their children will conform to them." Adults also need to learn that "forcing it down their throats" doesn't work well. It's called indoctrination. I may not abide by much of what I was taught at the College of Education, but one thing I do agree with is that indoctrination achieves no lasting moral effect but fear of adults. Children must learn to think for themselves and appropriate for themselves the values we hold so dear. Why are we afraid to let them do that? Are we that unsure of our values, our God?

If all adults lived out the values that they say they hold, children would have ample opportunity to see value choices and their consequences. If parents are unwilling or unable to realize this modeling responsibility, they have no right complaining to schools. Teaching values isn't a responsibility designated only to schools and churches.

Modeling correct behavior is a good start to affecting the morals of young people. There is another important responsibility parents have-prayer. The public schools are a spiritual battleground. Pray for your children. Surround them with a God-made protective barrier of prayer. Bless them, verbally and physically, before they leave in the morning. Pray for the teachers-if they're Christian, that they'll be strengthened; if they aren't that their eyes would be opened to the truth.

What specific things can parents do?

Concerned parents should become involved in any parent groups, meet with the teacher regularly at open houses or parent-teacher meetings, and, most of all, communicate with the school and teacher. They shouldn't wait for the teacher or school to contact them. One prime piece of advice for parents concerned about their children's education is simple: *get involved*! Give up your excuses and make

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Want to Know More?

Following is a list of books which I've used as resources which may be helpful for parents or others interested in learning more about what can be done.

Berger, Eugenia Hepworth. *Beyond the Classroom: Parents as Partners in Education.* rev. ed. St. Louis: Mosby, 1983.

Buskin, Martin. *Parent Power: A Candid Handbook for Dealing with Your Child's School.* New York: Walker, 1975.

Jenkinson, Edwad B. *The Schoolbook Protest Movement: 40 Questions and Answers.* Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1986.

Jeremiah, David Dr. *The New Age in the Classroom.* San Diego, CA: Turning Point, [1992].

Lurie, Ellen. *How to Change the Schools: A Parent's Action Handbook on How to Fight the System.* 1st ed. New York: Random House, 1970.

Melton, David. *Burn the Schools - Save the Children.* New York: Thomas V. Crowell Co., 1975.

Miller, Mary Susan. *Bringing Learning Home.* New York: Harper & Row, 1981.

Mueller, Van D. "Choice: The Parents' Perspective." *Phi Delta Kappan,* 68:10 (June 1987): 761-762.

Pfeil, Mary Pat. *Title 1, ESEA: Working with Schools: A Parents' Handbook.* Washington, D.C.: United States Office of Education, 1980.

Straughan, Roger. *Can We Teach Children to Be Good? Basic Issues in Moral Personal and Social Education,* new ed. Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1988.

Wirsing, Marie E. *Teaching and Philosophy: A Synthesis.* Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, Inc., 1972.

To India and Back

Late in 1993, Tim Fox, Bill Jewell, and Lester DeRoos journeyed to India on a three-week short-term missions trip. This year Tim, Bill, and their wives will return to India as career Advent Christian missionaries. During their 1993 trip, Tim kept a daily journal of their missionary adventure, excerpts of which appear below.

Sunday, September 19

1:30 a.m. We have landed in Los Angeles and the temperature is 68 degrees. Coming off the Delta flight and making our way through the L.A. terminal, I was impressed to go to the baggage claim area and do a quick check for my luggage. It was not supposed to be there, but should be in the hold of a 747 Singapore Airlines jet. Wow, am I glad I went to the baggage claim area for there sat my bag with two weeks worth of clothes and care packages for the missionaries. Who knows where it would have ended up! I am thankful for the gentle nudges of the Holy Spirit which can save us much unnecessary frustration. Bill and I have to make our way to the International Flights Terminal. Even with wheels it is a real chore to move my bag that distance.

1:45 a.m. We find Singapore Airlines and get our tickets verified and secure our boarding passes. When we arrive at the gate for the flight, we finally meet up with Les DeRoos, Bill's close friend from previous trips to India. Les has been wondering where we have been.

2:15 a.m. We have boarded the huge 747/400 that will wing us across the world's largest ocean, the Pacific. The flight from L.A. to Taipei, Taiwan, where the aircraft will be refueled, is 10,897km and will take 13 hrs.

3:30 a.m. We are settled into the flight nicely now. The aircraft is not full, so we can sit where we want to. The 747/400 is a jumbo jet with 10 seats across. Three on each side and four in the middle. The arm rests will swing upwards, thus making it possible to lie across the seats and sleep. Once the pillows and blankets were broken out, sleep we did. We crossed the International Date Line sometime during the night over the Pacific. We have now gained a day. Though my body says it is still Sunday, the time zone says it is Monday.

Tuesday, September 21

8:00 a.m. We landed in Madras, India, at 10:15 p.m. last night. Awoke this morning to the sounds of heavy traffic outside our window. Incessant horn honking! After cleaning up we headed downstairs to the hotel restaurant where Bill and Les ordered spicy Indian fare (rice cakes with coconut sauce) and I had coffee, juice, and toast. Having been in India before, Bill and Les had made many friends and contacts. With our spare time this morning we decided to look up one of their friends who works at the Central Railway Station here in Madras, a gentleman named Alexander Rainbow. Our mode of transportation to the train station is a motorized rickshaw. I thought last night's ride in the jeep was overly exhilarating but the ride in the rickshaw is just plain crazy!

I soon discovered why all the incessant horn honking. The horn on any Indian vehicle is its most important feature. More important even than the brakes (which they seem to use as little as possible). By the grace of God (and I mean that) we finally arrived at the Central Station and located Alexander, a Christian brother who was Bill and Les' translator during past ministry trips. We somehow

made it back to the hotel shortly before Marion Damon picked us up and brought us to meet Joy Hollis at the Taj where we had lunch together. The plan is for us to spend most of our stay here in India in Kodiakanal instead of Madras. The sharing at lunch was insightful. Back at the hotel we gave Joy Hollis her portion of the goodies from America. She was quite pleased.

5:45 p.m. Joy has returned to the Residency Hotel to pick us up to take us to Eggmore Train Station where we will catch the southbound train at 7:00 p.m. for a 300 mile ride to Kodiaroad Station. The journey will be an 11-hour version of the Orient Express. Marion's driver Raj is going with us on the trip to make sure we get off at the right stop. We are much reassured by this gesture. Raj sang us Tamil worship choruses as we traveled. The Indians apparently sing all the verses (and there are many verses) of their songs. Finally we all are tired enough to sleep and so we pull down the berths and fall into fitful sleep (fitful because of the rocking of the train and the noisy passing of northbound trains).

Wednesday, September 22

6:00 a.m. Just arrived at Kodiaroad Station with four minutes to unload ourselves and our luggage from the train. We did some quick scrambling. Raj left us on the platform while he went to look for our driver. He soon came back and we made our way to the parking lot where Joseph was waiting for us with the Kodiakanal Advent Christian Mission van. We left the station and began to travel across the south India plains toward mountains to the East. Finally we turned for the mountains and began to ascend. The two-hour journey up the mountain was breathtaking not only for the magnificient scenery but also because of the narrowness of the road and numerous hairpin turns. The paved portion of the road is wide enough for only one vehicle. When oncoming traffic is encountered one vehicle must give way to the other by pulling over to the shoulder of the road (which sometimes puts you just inches away from a 500-foot drop off)!

8:30 a.m. We have just arrived at the Advent Christian Mission Station in Kodiakanal (elevation 6,500 feet). Barbara White was standing in the driveway waiting to greet us. This mission compound is beautiful. The sun is out and the temperature is a mild 70 degrees (so much for two weeks of sweat!). After chatting a bit, Barbara invited us into her and Marion's bungalow for breakfast (Marion will be making the journey from Madras to join us on Saturday). We enjoyed a tasty western breakfast of scrambled eggs, toast, and tangerines.

Following breakfast Barbara gave us a tour of the mission compound. There are 6 buildings on 2 acres of land (a residence for her and Marion, a residence for the cook, a hostel that serves as the classrooms and housing for the School of Evangelism, a garage that is home to a jeep and a van, a church, and a guest house). All in all, a very nice complex. After we got settled in the guest house we went into town in the jeep to exchange American dollars for Indian rupees ($1=30 rupees). There is a beautiful lake in the town with mountains towering around it. When we returned to the mission compound Barbara introduced us to A. Gell Knight, pastor of the Advent Christian Church here as well as an instructor in the School of Evangelism. There are currently four students in the school training to be pastors.

After a spaghetti supper we joined with Pastor Gell Knight, the School of Evangelism students, and members of the Kodiakanal Church to do street preaching in two outlying villages. The scenery is wonderful. The first village we ministered in is a farming community with terraced plots of land running up and down the slopes of the mountains. The main crops of this village are potatoes, carrots, and green beans. Joseph drove the van right into the center of the village where it seemed like most of the inhabitants had gathered. After we assembled our group the students and church people began to beat a drum and sing some Christian choruses.

Soon a crowd had gathered and Pastor Gell Knight began to preach. One of the students repeated his message word for word in a louder voice (I asked later why they did this and was told that the student was the pastor's loud speaker system!) When Pastor Gell Knight was finished speaking he introduced Bill Jewell who then shared a message as well. Afterwards one man came forward and indicated he was a Christian and was in need of a Bible in the Tamil language. Bill will try to get one to him.

At the second village Les DeRoos spoke outside in the dark to those who were in hearing distance of his voice. We then adjourned to the local Advent Christian Church in the village (which A. Gell Knight also pastors) for prayer meeting. I spoke here on the cost of serving Jesus. We arrived back at the mission compound exhausted at 9:00 p.m.

Thursday, September 23

Awoke at 6:30 a.m. feeling much rested. We prayed on the way out that we would not experience jet lag and God is answering our prayers. The cook just arrived at our cottage with coffee! I like the service around there. Yesterday I felt myself working to get adjusted to the altitude. We went as high as 7,000 feet. Today I hope that adjustment is easier. Called my wife Ruth at 8:08 a.m. (10:38 p.m. her time). Got through on the third try. Ruth sounded well. It was so good to hear her voice.

Friday, September 24

Awoke this morning at 4:30 a.m. pleading for a critically ill member of our congregation back home. Later on (6:00 a.m.) we were serenaded by Hindu worshipers at a nearby temple. I am now sitting on the veranda of the cottage we are staying in watching Kodiakanal come to life. I never imag-

ined that this place would be so picturesque and temperate. Climate wise it would be easy to live here.

I spoke in the School of Evangelism chapel service this morning from 1 Thess. 5:23 on the sanctification work of the Holy Spirit and our need to let the Holy Spirit make us content where Jesus has put us. Afterwards I came to their morning class session and discussed with the students one of the toughest teachings of Jesus-love of our enemies.

The students shared about Hindu opposition to the gospel. There are groups of Hindus whose mission is to persecute Christians and even kill pastors. The students went on to share that opposition to Christianity in India is growing stronger. These young men are literally willing to give their lives to Jesus and the gospel. One of our Advent Christian pastors here in a village near Kodiakanal is living in a rented house and ministering right next to the residence of one of the leaders of such an extreme Hindu group. He is putting his life on the line!

After lunch we boarded the van to travel three hours down the mountains and across the plains to speak at the newly founded Advent Christian Church in the city of Dindagal (500,000 pop.). On the way down we stopped to admire a huge rosewood tree valued at over $500,000. We eventually arrived at pastor Daniel's home where they served us light refreshments. Pastor Daniel had me come downstairs and lay hands upon his new motor scooter to dedicate it to the Lord's service.

On the way to the church service we stopped at the home of a crippled man who is the brother of a member of the church. The crippled man is a Hindu. There were idols all over the home. We prayed briefly for him but afterwards agreed that our prayers for healing were of little use because of the idolatry. The church service had to be held in a local school because of the size of the crowd (well over 100). I brought greetings and Bill and Les preached. Many came forward for prayer. We ate our supper in the van on the way home. Arrived back in Kodaikanal after midnight.

The paved portion of the road is wide enough for only one vehicle. When oncoming traffic is encountered one vehicle must give way to the other by pulling over to the shoulder of the road (which sometimes puts you just inches away from a 500-foot drop off)!

Saturday, September 25

Marion Damon arrived this morning just before breakfast after the long train ride from Madras. We spent today visiting with Marion and Barbara. Went into town for awhile and secured a rowboat and spent some time on the lake. Such a nice setting.

Sunday, September 26

Last night Kodiakanal had a celebration of sorts during which they played loud music over a loud speaker most all night. The sound reverberated through the mountains! We all got very little sleep as a result. Much thinking about home. I wouldn't feel right if I did not have a chance to preach twice on a Sunday morning, and so after breakfast pastor Gell Knight took me on a scary ride on the back of his motorcycle to a village church for their 8:30 a.m. service. We had special prayer for Ai, the man from my congregation back home and the church people promised they would keep on praying. I spoke from Psalm 121.

Arrived back at the Kodiakanal Church as they were beginning to sing. Spoke again from Psalm 121. It is very interesting preaching with the help of a translator. Pastor Gell Knight translated for me at the village church while Marion Damon did so at the Kodiakanal Church. They are used to long messages here in the Indian Advent Christian churches. When I was going to college one of my professors challenged us aspiring preachers to become the master of the 20-minute sermon. I have basically tried to do that through the years of my ministry.

In India they expect an hour-long message. The longest I could speak here is 45 minutes. That is still a 20-minute or so message with 20 minutes or so of translation. I speak a sentence (or part of a sentence if it is too long) and the translator repeats it. I found it interesting trusting the translator to say it as I said it and keep the meaning of what I meant.

Bill left early this morning with one of the drivers to travel to a village on the south side of the mountains where he will speak at our Advent Christian Church there. Les left early with Barbara to travel to another Advent Christian Church in a village in coffee plantation country. There is to be a baptism there. Marion and I had lunch together and enjoyed great fellowship. We both agreed that a Sunday afternoon nap is in order after our interrupted rest of last night.

Bill and Les arrived back at the cottage at 4:00 p.m., both very excited about their day. I attended the evening

service at the Kodiakanal Church. One of the students spoke and though I could not understand a word he said, in my spirit there was a witness from the Holy Spirit that it was good stuff. So tired tonight that I went to bed without any supper.

Monday, September 27

2:45 p.m. Just finished eating a late lunch with Marion and Barbara. I finally tried some genuine Indian food (curry, ginger, potatoes, meat and rice). It was all right but I'm starting to dream of a nice big cheeseburger. Spent this afternoon reading for awhile and then taught Bill and Les how to play black dot. While we were playing cards two of the teenage boys who work around the compound came for a visit. They asked many questions about America (they speak a little English) and about our impression of India. I gave them (Thomas and Jake) some peppermint candy. They weren't sure at first they would like it but they tried it and thought it was good.

The rain this afternoon was heavy at times. Marion shared that during the hard monsoon season it can rain so much that the road going down to the plains and the railway station can be washed out for a month at a time! Thus they become stuck on the mountains for weeks sometimes. I told Bill and Les that if I have to walk down the mountain I want to be on the big bird (747) for home this coming Saturday night!

After supper tonight Marion and Barbara told us more about their experiences in India these past 38 years. We asked them about snakes. They told us there are none in the mountains but that it is a different matter down in Madras. Barbara used to have two terrier dogs which kept the snakes at bay. Their residence in Madras is next to a park which contains cobra snakes. The cobras climb the trees and slip over the walls into the Advent Christian Mission compound there. Barbara's little dogs killed 7 cobra snakes until the female had a litter, became full of milk, and was slowed down in her reaction timing. As a result she was bitten by a cobra and died. The male was bitten by a cobra and died a couple days later. On another occasion Barbara wanted to show Marion the brightness of a new flashlight she had just bought. She started into her bathroom to shine the flashlight and, as she turned it on, the beam shined upon a deadly viper snake that would have surely bitten her if she had gone into the dark to turn on the electric light. God is so good!

There are groups of Hindus whose mission is to persecute Christians and even kill pastors. One of our Advent Christian pastors here in a village near Kodiakanal is living in a rented house and ministering right next to the residence of one of the leaders of such an extreme Hindu group.

Tuesday, September 28

6:30 a.m. Awoke this morning to the chanting of the Catholic priest being broadcast over a loud speaker. The Indians seem to like their religion loud and take delight in sounding it out so that the surrounding community can hear it whether they want to or not. Even the Advent Christian Mission students hook up an amplifier and speaker (in the smallest of churches) and blast the service outside to the surrounding community. And why not? At least they are trumpeting the truth to their neighbors. If we tried this tactic at home our neighbors would bring an injunction against us to keep us quiet.

Talked with Ruth on the phone again this morning. I'm ready to come home. Two weeks is starting to seem a bit long now. I really miss my best friend! Great time of sharing again after supper tonight. We ended this last night in Kodiakanal with a great time of prayer for direction about the work in India. Marion ended with a word of encouragement.

Wednesday, September 29

Today we journey down the mountains to head back to Madras for three days of ministry. I can feel a stronger tug for home stirring within me. Marion and Barbara killed the fatted calf for us for our final meal with them (canned ham, sweet potato, and stuffed green peppers). They have made our visit as nice as it possibly could be. I hope I have the opportunity to reciprocate someday. They shall most definitely be invited to come to Oxford and share their experiences when they return home (summer of 1995).

We gathered around for prayer at the van and then headed off down the mountains in a rainstorm at 4:10 p.m. The rain stopped when we got below the 3,000 foot level. It was very warm and muggy on the plains. Arrived at the Kodiaroad Railway Station at 6:45 p.m. Sam (one of the drivers from Kodiakanal) is going with us on the train to Madras to make sure we arrive safely. While waiting for the train we met two interesting men. One was a ship pilot from Saudi Arabia. He

had been visiting family in Kodiakanal. The other man (Peter Matthews) had been to Kodiakanal leading an evangelism seminar at the International School for the Billy Graham Association. He knows some of our pastoral grads from the School of Evangelism. The train was late in picking us up...got underway at 8:45 p.m. An uneventful all-night ride to Madras.

Thursday, September 30

Raj met us at the Madras Station at 6:30 a.m. He brought us back again to the Residency Hotel where we were given a corner room this time. Very nice. Hot water for a shower for the first time in days. Wonderful! We have made contact with Joy Hollis and she gave us the schedule for the day. Our time is our own until this evening. We were driven to the Singapore Airlines office in Madras to reconfirm our reservations for our flight home Saturday evening. We are to be at the airport by 8:30 p.m.

Back at the hotel I just heard on the TV that a disastrous earthquake had struck India just southeast of Bombay. It happened when we were on the train to Madras. Apparently tremors were felt in Madras. We didn't feel any while on the train as it is a shaky, bouncy ride anyway. Hope our families do not think we have been involved in the quake.

We met Joy at an Advent Christian Church located in a Madras slum for the weekly prayer meeting tonight. The service began at 8:00 p.m. and ended at 10:30 p.m. All three of us spoke briefly. As is usually the case there was much prayer and laying on of hands at the end of the meeting. They honored us with garlands made up of the cocoons of the silkworm. Bill, Les, and I were talking today about how uncaring the Indian population is about proper sanitation and cleanliness. I can't begin to describe the filth that is everywhere you look. I don't know how they stand the stench and rot of it all. A culture's predominate belief system certainly produces a moral, intellectual, economic, and motivational climate. Hinduism and Islam have bankrupted this country's enormous potential in physical and human resources. Christianity pulls people up while idolatry sucks them down into a pit of degradation.

Friday, October 1

9:35 a.m. Just returned to the hotel room after a breakfast of toast, juice, and coffee. No time to experiment with Indian food as we are on the verge of going home. While at breakfast our conversation led to thoughts about our families. I wish so much I had brought a set of pictures to show the people here as well as for me to enjoy.

Madras is experiencing a severe water shortage at this time. There are trucks hauling water all over the city 24 hours a day. The trucks often leak their precious cargo and so the streets are wet with lost water. It's crazy. At lunch today, Joy Hollis shared that to get to India in the early days of her tenure required a six-week trip by ship. I am thankful that we will fly home in a matter of hours rather than weeks. I spoke this morning to the Advent Christian Fellowship pastors in Madras as they gathered to receive their pay.

This evening we attended an Indian wedding. When the officials realized we were there they honored us with fragrant flower garlands. In India the parents of the bride and groom arrange the marriage. Is it better to love and then marry (American) or marry and learn to love (Indian)?

Saturday, October 2

Today is going home day! There is a typhoon forming east of the Philippines. Hope we can avoid it as we fly east to meet the west! We all three spoke at a Women's Rally at the Advent Christian Mission compound in Madras. I brought greetings from our Eastern Regional WH&FMS President Barbara Schaeffner and challenged the ladies to consider opening their homes up for small group Bible studies that might interest their unsaved neighbors. They listened attentively. The ladies were amused when Bill and Les related how on a previous trip to India with their wives the village people offered them new wives because they had not yet had children.

After the rally Joy took us to her bungalow where we enjoyed lunch. We had one last supper in the hotel restaurant (fish and chips if you can believe it). When I returned to the hotel room I realized I had left my camera bag with my passport and tickets home hanging on my chair in the restaurant! Panic attack! I flew back downstairs to discover that Bill had picked it up and was on his way up to the room with it. PTL!

We arrived at the Madras Airport at 8:15 p.m. Before we could get to our departure gate we had to go through six checkpoints (immigration, customs, guard at the gate waiting area, on board luggage Xray station, and two more guards who checked our papers once again before we could begin our walk down the boarding ramp). While going through this lengthy process to leave India the airport music system began to play "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." If we could have shut our eyes, clicked our heels together, and said, "I want to come home, Auntie Em!" and it would have gotten us home sooner we would have done it! The flight out was delayed 45 minutes so we didn't leave Indian soil until 1:00 a.m. Sunday.

Sunday, October 3, 1993

Our flight home took us to Singapore, Tokyo, L.A., Dallas, Boston. The flight over the Pacific took us on a more northward track to avoid the typhoon in the south. Bill and I left Les in L.A. as he was flying home to Iowa. We arrived back in Boston at 1:00 a.m. Monday. Coming home we lived Sunday twice as we crossed the International Date Line once again. Arrived in Boston tired but happy campers and so glad to see Ruth and Bill and Patti Dyer. PTL! ❑

When Others Need Our Help

Cindy Batson
Portsmouth, N.H.

HOW CAN WE help church families or individuals when they experience a crisis? When tough times come, how can we show encouragement in practical ways? We all face disruptions to our families at one time or another—an unexpected illness, a painful divorce, the death of a family member. The list goes on.

Due to a difficult pregnancy with our second daughter, the doctor ordered complete bed rest for the last three months. This could have been overwhelming without a loving church family. Because we had an active three-year-old, many of the women of the church volunteered to help. Some of them would come to the house to supervise her play, others drove her to nursery school, and others would take her to their homes. A "meals on wheels" program was set up so that every other day someone prepared a meal for us. All of these things helped my husband have the time and energy to carry out his pastoral work.

Several years later, our family suffered another crisis when I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Because of extreme fatigue and painful legs, I could do nothing but rest and sleep. Again, our church family took good care of us.

Practical ways you can help

Here are some helpful things we learned while going through this tough time:

1. When wishing to help a family or individual, *be direct*! Don't say, "Call me if you need anything." Instead, call and say, "I'm sending over food for supper. When can I drop it off?"

2. When preparing meals, try to use disposable containers. This way there will be no confusion in getting the dish back to its rightful owner. Also, it will be appreciated by other family members because they won't have dishes to wash.

3. If you don't have time to cook a meal, how about sending a supply of paper plates, cups and napkins? These are things that can always be used.

4. Send boxes of thank-you notes or stationery. A book of stamps would also be a nice surprise.

5. Offer to drive the patient to doctors' appointments. When I was having therapy for my legs, I needed to be driven to the doctor several times a week. Many women stepped in to help.

6. Offer to do the grocery shopping. One woman in our church came every Friday for our shopping list, brought the groceries in, and put them away for us.

7. Offer to vacuum and dust the house. When you're confined to bed, little crumbs or dust can seem bigger than normal! One lady in our church came in once each week for several weeks and did our housecleaning. This cheered me up!

8. Don't drop in unannounced! It's best for the patient to have as few visitors as possible. Too many visits can tire the patient. Also, if you plan to make a visit, try to avoid bringing small children along. A phone call is usually preferred.

9. If your church videotapes or makes an audiotape of the morning service, send this to the patient each week. When I was convalescing for three months, I enjoyed this time of worship. I felt part of the congregation as I watched the tape each week.

10. If you're not able to do any of these things, send a get-well card or a personal note. During a hospital stay, I received a beautiful card from our women's fellowship. Each one was given a sheet of note paper to write a personal note to me. It made me feel like I was still part of the group.

These are just a few practical suggestions. Perhaps you can add some to my list. ❑



Cindy is the wife of Rev. William Batson. Willie and Cindy live in Portsmouth, N.H., with their two teenage daughters. Cindy teaches learning-disabled children in a public school in Portsmouth.

GOD of the Second Chance

Carl Rundgren
Northwood, N.H.

THE FIRST THING that comes to mind when I hear the words "New Year's Day" is the word "resolutions." Perhaps you've made some this year. The idea behind them seems to be that New Year's Day provides an opportunity to start over again, fresh from ground zero, in an attempt to become a better person.

This annual ritual may fall into the category of games people play, but I suspect that a good number of people take New Year's resolutions seriously. I would not be surprised to find that many deeply desire such a simple process by which their lives could be altered.

We talk about turning over a new leaf, a new beginning, a clean slate, and a second chance. All of these express the wish to have the past forgotten and the future made different from the past. Add to these the long list of means and methods tried in the course of the year to change life—therapy, meditation, yoga, "religion," and more—and it's safe to say that this desire for deep, personal, change is a common denominator in the human race.

Could it be that all of us know, deep down inside ourselves, that we are sinners? People would not want to use that term, I'm sure, but could it be that they know?

While people search for quick and easy answers to their dissatisfaction, the Bible holds out the only viable solution to the problem. The Bible surpasses all other options on at least three points.

First, the Bible alone instructs us about the cause of humanity's problem. It is not a matter of learning how to make wise choices. The truth is that we are sinners by nature. We are incapable of making wise choices all of the time. We may, by God's grace, do well in some areas, but our sinfulness will show itself at some point. It may be pride or selfishness, greed or lust, anger or bitterness, or any number of things. All other suggested plans of action state that humanity is OK—we simply need to improve in these areas. God's Word alone says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

It's safe to say that the desire for deep, personal, change is a common denominator in the human race.

Second, only the Bible identifies our need for outside help. If we were able to effect a change in ourselves without outside help, it was not necessary for Jesus to die on the cross in order to deal with sin at the cost of his life. From the beginning, the Bible makes it plain that sin must be dealt with by the death of an innocent victim. "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

Those who turn away from God's only offer of salvation are condemned already by the sin in their lives. Those who place their trust in Jesus Christ are no longer condemned by their sin, but have life—life as it was intended to be enjoyed. (See John 3:16-18). The difference between the two is a willingness to receive outside help.

Finally, only the Bible offers com-

plete change *and* forgiveness for the past *and* the resources to deal with the future! "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away, behold-all things have become new!" (2 Corinthians 5:17). "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). The change offered by Christ is so radical that the Bible calls it being "born again." Not only does God offer this radical change to all who believe in Christ, but he offers complete forgiveness for all the sin that we have ever done.

He even goes beyond that! Recognizing that we will struggle with our sinful natures until the end of our days, God promises to cleanse us from all unrighteousness as often as we confess our sins to him.

The saying found on many bumper stickers is true indeed! "Christians aren't perfect—just forgiven." That forgiveness relieves those who trust in Christ from the self-condemnation that many heap upon themselves, especially at this time of year.

What God offers in Christ is a second chance—not a surface make-over, but a change of heart and mind that affects our entire lives. Only by faith in Jesus Christ can sin and the consequences of sin be overcome.

If you are looking for relief from the weight of your sins, there is hope! God has made provision for you in the death of his Son. He wants to change your life. He offers forgiveness for all you have ever done. Put your trust in Christ alone for your salvation.

If you have already received God's plan of salvation for yourself, remember that there are many around you who have not heard. How shall they hear? Don't be ashamed to speak for him. They will not hear unless someone is sent—and we have been sent! ❑

Carl Rundgren is pastor of the Northwood, N.H., Advent Christian Church.

Balance continued from page 5

aging it is to hear stories like these being told by student summer volunteers, after they have tasted shoulder-to-shoulder work overseas, doing something useful, and being asked to come back.

Yes, some people in some places are still eager to hear the good news from some missionaries. But we must not allow our view of the globe to be tilted too far one way or the other. ❑

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Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

February

1 Pray that the four new Advent Christian missionaries in India—**Tim and Ruth Fox** and **Bill and Celia Jewell**— will sense God's direction as they begin their ministry.

2 Praise God for the dedicated service that members of the **General Conference Executive Council** provide in overseeing the many ministries of the Advent Christian Church.

3 Pray that General Conference President **Glennon Balser** and the **Executive Council** will experience God's leading and direction as they meet today in Charlotte.

4 Praise God for the ministry that **Marion Damon**, **Beryl Joy Hollis**, and **Barbara White** continue to have with students, pastors, and church leaders in India.

5 Pray for God's will to be done in several uncertain circumstances relating to Advent Christian work in **India**.

6 Praise God for his call upon **Warren Prestidge** to serve as director of Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

7 Pray that the Lord's wisdom and strength will be with **Rev. Prestidge** in the beginning months of his work at the college.

8 Praise God for the recent opportunity that **David Vignali** had to visit China and interact with Advent Christians in that nation.

9 Pray for the work of Advent Christian pastors and conference leaders in the **Philippines**.

10 Praise God for the opportunities that he is opening for Advent Christian mission work to begin in **New Zealand** and **Honduras**.

11 Pray that God will provide the right missionary candidates for Advent Christian work to begin in **New**

Zealand.

12 Praise God for renewed interest in **mission service** among Advent Christians.

13 Pray that God will raise up a Spanish-speaking missionary couple to begin Advent Christian work in **Honduras.**

14 Praise God for the commitment to Christ that Advent Christians in **Liberia** continue to show in the face of civil war and persecution.

15 Pray for the safety of Liberian Advent Christian leader **Rev. Ben Cleon, Sr.**

16 Praise God for the vital ministry that **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** continue to have with the Advent Christian Church in El Florido, Mexico.

17 Pray that Asia/Pacific Area Director **George Teshera**'s contacts with Advent Christian national leaders and missionaries will be especially fruitful this spring.

18 Praise God for the opportunities that **Steven and Ann Lay** have to communicate the work of Advent Christian missions at mission conferences here at home.

19 As Advent Christian congregations prepare for **Penny Crusade**, pray that God will use March and April to inspire great prayer and financial support for Advent Christian ministries around the world.

20 Pray that God will give **Karen Rigney** strength and encouragement as she studies the Japanese language during her first term of service.

21 Pray that the Lord will work through **Margaret Helms** as she works to communicate God's love to people with whom she comes in contact.

22 Praise God for the faithfulness of Christians in **Malaysia** in the face of strong opposition to the gospel in this officially Islamic country.

23 Pray that God will use the work of Malaysian national missionaries **Lucus and Beulah Devasahayam, James and Mercy Devadasson, Ruth Devairakkam,** and **T. Devairakkam** to draw men and women, boys and girls to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

24 Praise God for the disciplemaking work that Advent Christian **student ministries** is doing on several Christian and university campuses across the United States.

25 Pray that **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** will know God's wisdom and grace in their work in inner-city Memphis, Tennessee.

26 Praise God for the Christian commitment of **your pastor and his family.**

27 Pray that your **pastoral family** will sense God's presence and strength today.

28 Praise God for his **grace and mercy.**

29 Pray that throughout the world, **people who are lost** without Jesus Christ will come to a saving knowledge of him and experience the wonderful grace of God.

School continued from page 8

the time.

Some avenues of involvement:

- Join parent groups and be active in them.
- Learn what materials are used in your school and review them.
- Familiarize your child(ren) with any materials you find objectionable and forewarn them.
- Voice your concerns to the teacher.
- Take time with your children to learn of and counter any teachings you feel are wrong.
- Write letters if a problem isn't addressed following the chain of command: teacher, principal, superintendent, school board.
- Go to a school board meeting and voice your complaint.

Some problems cannot be resolved simply by getting involved. With any serious problem, be sure you ask God for guidance before each step you take. If nothing has worked, get in touch with a Christian lawyer. Two national organizations that can help in difficult situations are The National Committee for Citizens in Education and The Rutherford Institute. Don't give up! Your children are worth the fight. ❑

Cheryl Harris has taught in both public and private schools and has a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from the University of Maine in Orono. Her husband, William Harris, serves as pastor of the Mechanic Falls, Maine Advent Christian Church. They're in their second year of ministry with the church.

Editorial continued from page 3

"I Have a Dream" speech or his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," I'm reminded that racial reconciliation must be grounded in a distinctly Christian vision of the value of human beings. And I'm reminded of God's concern for justice reflected by the prophet Amos:

You trample on the poor
and force him to give you grain...
You oppress the righteous and take bribes
and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts...
Seek good, not evil
that you may live...
Hate evil, love good;
maintain justice in the courts.
But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!
(Amos 5:11; 13-15; 24)

When Christians foster reconciliation between people, we reflect the justice and mercy of the God we claim to serve. ❑

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

It makes no sense that the race problem in America is getting worse instead of better. Laws have been changed for the better, and we've had over twenty-five years of integration to work on the relationship between whites and blacks. But it seems that for every step forward, we take two steps back. As a black Christian, I thought our struggle for integration in the sixties would lead to reconciliation. I was wrong. Where whites had once initiated racial separation, now many blacks are coming to prefer separating along racial lines. Race seems to be one nut that even Christianity is having a hard time cracking... I believe that the first step in the reconciliation process is admitting that the race problem exists and that our inability to deal with race has weakened the credibility of the gospel.

—*Spencer Perkins in* More Than Equals

Evolutionism is perhaps the most jealously guarded dogma of the American public philosophy. Any sign of serious resistance to it has encountered fierce hostility in the past, and it will not be abandoned without a tremendous fight. The gold standard could go (glad to be rid of that!), Saigon abandoned, the Constitution itself slyly junked. But Darwinism will be defended to the bitter end.

—*Tom Bethell*

War is the second worst activity of mankind, the worst being acquiescence in slavery.

—*William F. Buckley Jr.*

In the case of abortion, for example, we're told that we must choose only one of two options—the life of the unborn child or the good of a young woman trapped in a difficult situation. I believe Christians need to reframe this issue in such a way that we are concerned for both. We need to think creatively how we can define reality in such a way that it becomes unthinkable to do anything but care for both.

—*James Davison Hunter in* Leadership

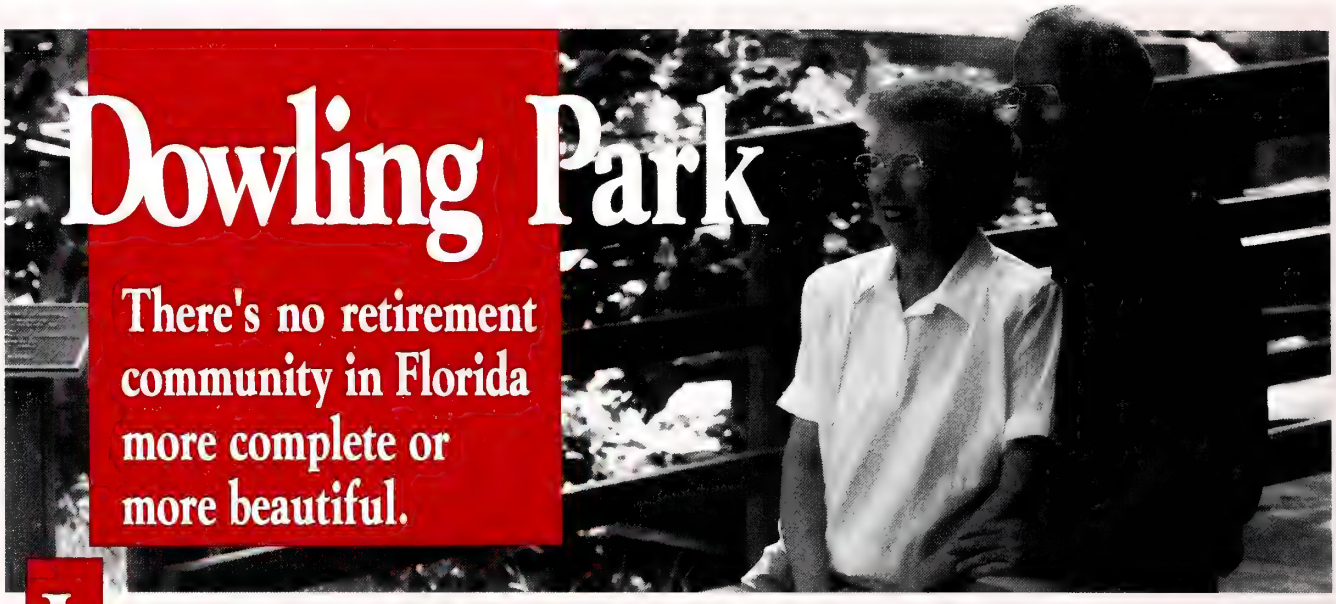
In other words...

For a Christian, the mind is important because God is important. Who, after all, made the world of nature, and then made possible the development of sciences through which we find out more about nature? Who formed the universe of human interactions, and so provided the raw material of politics, economics, sociology, and history? Who is the source of harmony, form, and narrative pattern, and so lies behind all artistic and literary possibilities? Who created the human mind in such a way that it could grasp the realities of nature, of human interactions, of beauty, and so made possible the theories on such matters by philosophers and psychologists? Who, moment by moment, sustains the natural world, the world of human interactions, and the harmonies of existence? Who, moment by moment, maintains the connections between what is in our minds and what is in the world beyond our minds? The answer in every case is the same. God did it, and God does it.

It is of immense significance that evangelicals are not doing the kind of work for which research universities exist and which is recognized by Nobel prizes. Why? Because the great institutions of higher learning in Western culture function as the *mind* of Western culture. They define what is important, they specify procedures to be respected, they set agendas for analyzing the practical problems of the world, they provide vocabulary for dealing with the perennial great issues, they produce the books that get read and that over decades continue to influence thinking around the world—and they do those tasks not only for the people who are aware of their existence but for us all.

Evangelicals who think that the basic intellectual operations performed by modern research universities can be conceded to "the world" without doing fundamental damage to the cause of Christ may think of themselves as orthodox Christians. In reality, however, they are modern-day Manichaeans, Gnostics, or Docetists.

— *Mark Noll in* The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind



Dowling Park

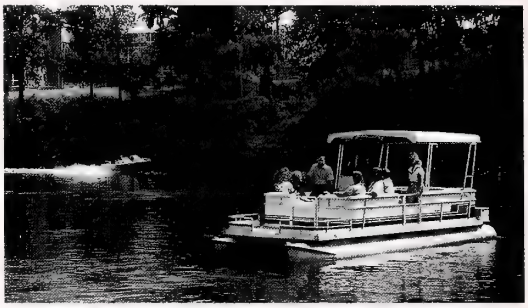
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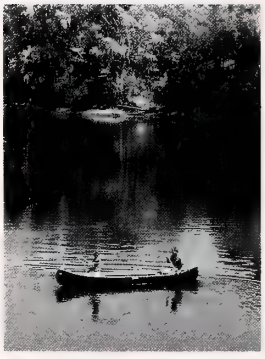
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WITNESS

March 1995



THE CHURCH BUILDING ISSUE



In this issue, we tour the original William Miller chapel, and find out what happened when Joanne Hunter painted her church's door bright red.

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"Don't you think that's awfully red?" someone asked Joanne Hunter. "Well, red usually is rather red," she responded. What happened when she painted the church doors red.

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Clayton Blackstone challenges us to renew our passion for Jesus while we wait for his return.

Just Say the Name • **Lee Strobel**

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Volume 43, Number 2

Advent Christian Witness

Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy, Timothy Setzer, Linda Leavitt**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria



ARE WE LISTENING?

IF YOU'RE LIKE me, you've had some Sundays when it was hard to get up and get to church. Last Sunday was like that for me. We were running late. Renee' was helping in children's church. And my thoughts were more on the week ahead than on worshiping my Creator.

As I sat in church, something happened during the first fifteen minutes. After the announcements, we stood and sang, "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation. Oh, my soul praise him, for he is thy health and salvation." After the hymn we prayed. And then we slowly and reflectively sang the worship chorus, "Alleluia." Two different types of Christian music, a great traditional hymn written hundreds of years ago and a fresh contemporary worship chorus, helped change my focus that morning. Instead of thinking about the busy week ahead, I was thinking about a merciful and gracious God. And I began to ponder his will and purposes.

Timeless truth in fresh ways

At its best, music not only communicates human emotion, it draws us into the awareness of God and reminds us that he is worthy of our worship, praise, and service. I'm glad that God doesn't limit musical expression to one particular idiom. He speaks through great hymns like "Amazing Grace," and "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing." He speaks through contemporary worship choruses like "Our God Reigns" or "We Are One in the Bond of Love." He speaks through musical styles like southern gospel, folk, country, even the contemporary Christian rap music of D.C. Talk.

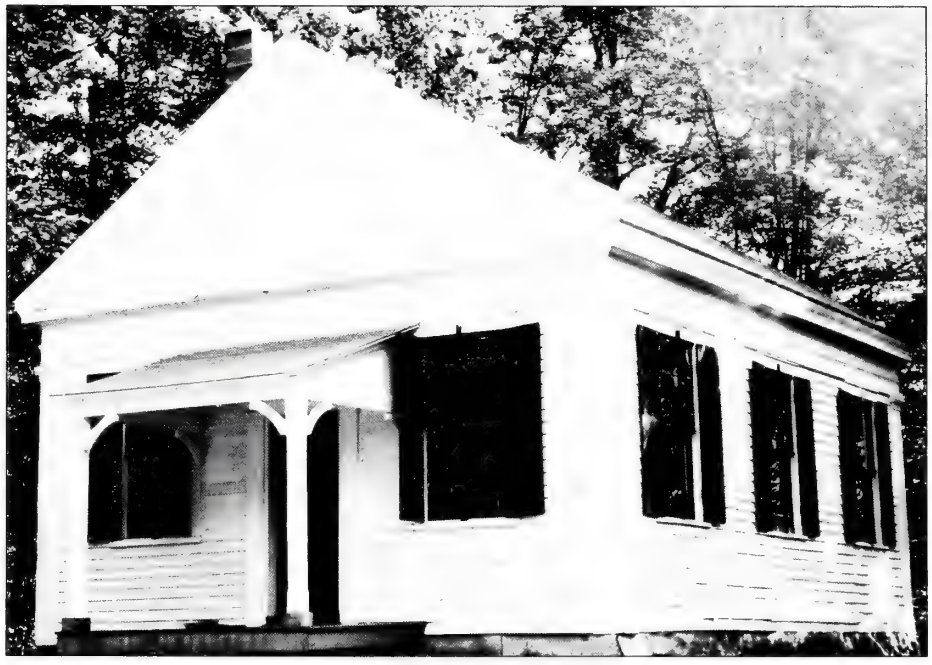
Christian rap music? O.K., it's not my cup of tea either. But for many young people in their teens and early twenties, it's a vehicle God can use to draw them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and point them toward a life of meaningful discipleship. You see, God's work isn't bounded by your musical taste or mine. As times change and musical styles change with them, the Lord enables his people to communicate timeless Christian truth in fresh ways.

For those of us who have been in the same church for many years, it's easy to get comfortable with a particular style of Christian music. Subconsciously, we think everyone should appreciate our kind of music. But the traditional church music we love so much may have little to say to someone with little appreciation for organ music or with no church background. And because our society has grown more secular over the past fifty years, millions of people especially younger people fall into that category.

Less rigidity

Sadly, many church conflicts have been precipitated by differences of opinion over what type or style of music the congregation should use in worship. I think the best way to deal with those differences is by learning to appreciate the variety of ways that God can work. We who love traditional church music (and I include myself with that number) need to understand that God speaks through fresh new styles of music like that short worship chorus that touched my heart last Sunday in church. If we're serious about good worship and about reaching people with the good news of God's love, we need less rigidity in our worship and more sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.

What's your morning worship like? Are you locked into the same familiar pattern Sunday after Sunday? Maybe it's time to ask, "What are some new ways that God could use to inspire us, draw us closer to him, and speak to our friends and neighbors in a new way?" ❑



William Miller Chapel:
A Heritage Renewed

Floyd L. McIntyre
N. Springfield, Vt.

WHEN MOTORISTS cross the state line of New York and Vermont they are greeted immediately by a New York State historical site marker. Like other markers placed strategically throughout the state this one calls attention to a place of historical significance. The marker gives only the name of the site and an arrow pointing the way. The sign simply reads "William Miller Chapel." To most travelers, the significance of the site is unknown. Only to those who know something about the Adventual Awakening of the 1830s and 40s or American church history does the name of William Miller mean anything at all. However, for Adventists who know something of their origins, the sign pointing to this historical site is a sign pointing to the birthplace of Adventism.

William Miller, a local farmer, justice of the peace, and well-known community leader of the early 19th century, had also served in the U.S. Army during the war of 1812. Sylvester Bliss gives an account of the establishment of the Miller homestead which would one day become the birthplace of Adventism and ultimately the site upon which the chapel that bears his name would be built.

"On the retirement of Mr. Miller from the Army, he removed his family from Poultney, Vermont to Low Hampton, N.Y., to begin there the occupation of farming. His father had died there, in the year 1812, leaving the homestead encumbered with a mortgage. That was canceled by Mr. Miller, who permitted his mother to live there, with his brother Solomon, while he purchased for himself another farm, in the neighborhood, about half a mile to the west. This lay mostly above the general level of the valley of the Poultney River, and comprised about two hundred acres of land, with a surface somewhat uneven, and with soil similar to that usually found in sections geologically marked by black slate and limestone.

"Two miles to the east was the village of Fairhaven, Vermont, near the Poultney River; and eight miles to the west, on the southern extremity of Lake Champlain, at the foot of bold, precipitous hills, was the village of

Whitehall, N.Y. On this spot, in 1815, Mr. Miller erected a convenient farmhouse, similar to those built through the interior of New England in that epoch."

—Sylvester Bliss

It was here in this farmhouse that Miller, following his conversion to Christianity, studied the Scriptures diligently and came to believe that Jesus Christ would soon return to this earth, in perhaps twenty years or so. Or as he said, "on or about the year 1843."

The next two decades witnessed the development of Adventism from a small movement spreading mostly through the country churches of western New England to a wide-spread revival making an impact on the great metropolitan areas of Boston and other cities in the Eastern part of the country. The history is exciting and filled with colorful figures like Joshua V. Himes who embraced the views of Miller and aided him in taking the message "to the world."

But it all came to a disappointing end in October of 1844 when, after numerous great expectations, Jesus did not return to earth. The Adventists (followers of Miller) were found floundering in their beliefs. Some gave up altogether while others persisted in trying to find out what went wrong and why. However, the movement continued in spite of the disappointment and Miller himself never stopped believing that "at the appointed time the end shall be." His reaction to the disappointment is best expressed in his own words, "I have fixed my mind upon another time, and here I mean to stand until God gives me more light—and that is, *today, today, and today,* until he comes."

For many years, William Miller and members of his family had been members of the Baptist church in Low Hampton. On January 29, 1845, Miller and members of his family were disfellowshiped from the church because of their Adventist views. Although the exact details are difficult to determine, it appears that in 1848, approximately three years after their dismissal from the local church, Miller gave permission for a small chapel to be built on the corner of his farm a short walking distance from his home. The chapel would be for use by those who continued to uphold the Adventist cause and desired to meet and worship together. Thus the Advent Chapel has become known as one of the earliest buildings built by Adventists.

In memory of the 1843-1844 message

Sometime after the forming of the Advent Christian Church in 1860, the members of the Advent Chapel in Low Hampton affiliated with the newly formed denomination and became an official Advent Christian Church. Early records of the church are scarce but some information exists in copies of early *Advent Christian Manuals* and publications. Sporadically, the William Miller Chapel in Low Hampton, New York, is listed in annuals dating from 1937 through 1949 as a member of the Hoosick Valley Conference. The 1902 edition of the *Advent Christian Annual* lists the church at Low Hampton with brother I.F. Barnes serving as pastor. The membership was recorded as being 45. In the 1909 edition of the register of Sunday Schools the Low Hampton Sunday school membership is reported as being thirty. There is no further mention of the chapel in the annuals after 1951.

Today, while new and modern church buildings are being built, the William Miller Chapel provides a tangible link with the past.

Several interesting events from the life and history of the chapel can be gleaned from contemporary issues of *The World's Crisis*. The following article shows the important role the little church played in the affairs of the Hoosick Valley Conference in the early 1900s.

A mission journey

"On June 9 we left the office to visit some of our churches and mission fields in New York State (sic) and Canada. On Wednesday the 10th, we attended a session of the Hoosick Valley A.C. Conference, which was being held at Low Hampton, N.Y.

"Here we were much encouraged by the greetings of kind friends and pleasant associations at the old William Miller home. For many years some things about this home were anything but satisfactory from a believer's standpoint, there being an absence of Christian life and example. We were therefore greatly pleased to find that Brother I.F. Barnes, who is pastor of the church at this place, and also at Castleton, Vermont, was living at the Miller home. The house has been put in good condition; the conference visitors were receiving their "daily bread" in the large dining room, and most of the ministers were being lodged in the many rooms which the house affords. It was a great blessing and inspiration to us that this historic home was being so fittingly occupied and so appropriately used, and that the church, in former years so long closed, is being regularly attended by good congregations.

"Brother Malone, our missionary (who attended this conference, and thereafter visited some of its churches), had the honor to sleep in the bed on which William Miller died, so that now he is thoroughly christened a 'Millerite.'"

Other news items gleaned from issues of *The World's Crisis* dating to the early 1900s show an intentional effort on behalf of many to turn the chapel into a memorial of William Miller. The November 4, 1908, issue of *The Crisis* included a report from the Hoosick Valley Conference held in Rutland, Vermont, during the previous month which included the following reference to the chapel.



"Under miscellaneous business, Brother I.N. Howard of Low Hampton, N.Y., spoke of the desire of the church at Low Hampton to make their church a memorial church, as it is the church in which William Miller was interested and very near his homestead. Privilege was given the Hoosick Valley Conference to place in the building a memorial window, and the Conference voted to do so, and appropriated a sum of money for that purpose."

The above mentioned window is still in place along with others installed during the same period and can be viewed by those visiting the chapel today. The inscription on the window reads: "In memory of the 1843-1844 Message."

Restoration

Pastor L.L. Chase, saw his dream come true as several projects were completed including the installation of stained glass windows, the engraving of a slate tablet listing the names of the charter members of the church and the holding of a special dedicatory service.

The following is taken from the Hoosick Valley Ministerial Association report published in *The World's Crisis* January 20, 1909, gives details of the special service.

"The dedicatory service was appointed for Thursday evening, December 17 (1908). A very pleasant feature of the occasion was the unveiling of the tablet (placed near the pulpit) containing the names of the charter members of the Advent Christian Church at Low Hampton, while two little girls, great grandchildren of William Miller sang—

"The mossy old graves where the pilgrims sleep

Shall be opened as wide as before."

"Another little girl, also a great grandchild, unveiled the tablet. Then came the dedicatory sermon preached by W.O. Higley of Castleton, Vermont. L.L. Chase, pastor of the church is to be commended for his earnest labor in making such extensive repairs on the church building, for it presented a fine appearance.

—Willis G. Browne, Sec."

The little chapel built on the William Miller farm for the express purpose of meeting the needs of those disfellowshiped Adventists ultimately became an active Advent Christian Church and functioned as such from the turn of the century until the mid-1900s. And through the efforts of many the chapel became a memorial to the man most responsible for the rise of Adventism.

Why the church ceased to function in the mid 1900s is probably not unlike so many others throughout the region. Amazingly, the small, unimposing chapel tucked away on a rural road in extreme eastern New York has physically survived. Apparently in the interim, from about the 1920s to 50s, difficulty and controversy relative to the ownership of the property surrounded the chapel. An article by Lee E. Baker published in *The New World's Crisis* July 22, 1953, brought news of a settlement. The deed to the property was officially accepted by officials of the Advent Christian General Conference having been granted to them by Mr. M.M. Phelps and his sons. The deed carried with it the stipulation that the Seventh Day Adventist group be allowed free access to the property at all times and that the property be maintained by both denominations through the establishment of a joint committee.

Renewed interest during the 1980s

For the next 30 years, the chapel received little attention. Occasional meetings were held on the property by both denominations and maintenance was kept to the bare necessities. However, in 1984, an event occurred which would soon propel the little Chapel into the national limelight. An organization known as Adventist Historic Properties Inc., "A group of Seventh-day Adventist Church administrators, educators, and laymen formed in 1981 as a volunteer, nonprofit corporation dedicated to acquiring, preserving and opening to visitors the most significant historic sites," was able to purchase the Miller homestead, adjacent to the chapel. For the following ten years, extensive research, including archaeological and archi-

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Does Jesus' Strategy Apply to World Missions?

Harold Patterson
Director of World Missions

IN THE LAST chapter of Matthew's gospel, Jesus commands his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations." During the last several years, Advent Christians have been rediscovering the importance of that command and the primary strategy for our development and growth as a denomination rests in obedience to the imperative to "make disciples." What part does that command play in World Missions? My response is that all we do in missions must be geared to Jesus' disciplemaking mandate.

We learn from Scripture that our Lord's Great Commission at its heart is based on making disciples. The apostle Paul was committed to that task as he was always discipling others in his missionary outreach. He instructed Timothy, a young church leader whom the apostle mentored, to commit these things to faithful men who would then teach others. Jesus' disciplemaking strategy enabled the early Christians to take the gospel throughout the world of their day. And I'm convinced it will work for Advent Christians as we enter the twenty-first century.

With many biblical methods of outreach—lifestyle evangelism, small groups, and one-on-one evangelism—Advent Christians have experienced more success overseas than at home. Disciplemaking is no exception. The major part of our success in the growth of Advent Christian missions in India has focused on training and developing lay leadership, especially with the shortage of trained pastors. We've experienced degrees of success in the Philippines and now see in Malaysia a serious commitment to disciplemaking on the part of our church leaders there.

As we've communicated our new focus on discipleship with Advent Christian missionaries and national leaders, there is a renewed desire and enthusiasm to expand this emphasis on each of our fields. Like a microscope being finely tuned, the Advent Christian emphasis on discipleship will impact mission work through:

- Discipling individual Christians through small-group Bible studies and correspondence courses offered through radio and newspaper.
- Leadership development on each Advent Christian field, perhaps including a strategy similar to the one used by the Berkshire Institute for Christian Studies in Lenox, Mass.
- Equipping pastors and pastoral students to be effective disciplemakers. We're committed to developing strong pastoral leadership through good Bible schools.

Dr. David A. Dean and Dr. Robert Fillinger, both from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, have for the past two years met with the faculty and leadership of the Tecate, Mexico, Bible Institute. This is one way we're looking to strengthen the training programs of schools on our mission fields.

- Helping national Advent Christian leaders equip others in their ranks for leadership and disciplemaking.
- Encouraging Advent Christian congregations to be sending mission agencies, recruiting and sending their own missionaries.
- Establishing an Urban Ministries training school here at home to enlist and train ethnic church planters to work in American and Canadian cities.
- Seeking fresh ways to present our message of life only in Christ.

I'm convinced that applying Jesus' disciplemaking strategy will be used by Advent Christian Missions not only to grow, but make an ever-expanding impact with the financial and people resources he has given us. Advent Christian Missions is committed to disciplemaking. My hope is that each of you will join with Advent Christians worldwide in the task of making disciples for Jesus Christ. ❑

WHEN HELP CAME

Carol Vandable
Ellisville, Missouri

I WASN'T particularly happy as a little girl. Oh, I had nice clothes, lots of toys, and our house was adequate. But my mother was an alcoholic. Only those who have lived through this particular nightmare can truly understand what my childhood was like. My parents fought constantly, often brutally.

During one extremely violent fight, I stood at the front door, alone, crying. I was feeling, as children caught in the middle often do, helpless and afraid. I dearly loved both parents and was terrified one of them would be hurt. The day ended as most, with my Dad leaving only to return later and resume the fight. I desperately pleaded for someone to help me. *But help didn't come.*

My parents weren't Christians but we had a wonderful neighbor who was. She took me to church with her every week where I began to learn about Jesus and his abundant love. I turned more and more to this kindly woman for solace and to learn about her loving Friend. During a revival at church, I accepted Jesus as my Savior and felt I had found the answer to all my problems. In my eight-year-old heart, I felt all I had to do was share this joyous news with my parents and all would be well. To my despair, Mom instead received the news with anger and ridicule. She forbade me to continue going to church. For a time, I continued to pray for Jesus to help me. *But help didn't come.*

As I grew into my teenage years, my mother's drinking grew worse. She was seldom sober and my life was turned upside down. I began to assume the domestic responsibilities for the house and the care of my younger brother. I became the family protector and caregiver, but not without a price. My childhood confusion grew into teenage anger and resentment. Once again, I tried prayer but it seemed as though my prayers were falling on deaf ears for, once again, *help didn't come.*

I desperately pleaded for someone to help me. But help didn't come.

A way out?

When I was nineteen, I thought my prayers had finally been answered. I was engaged to a loving, caring young man. Although Mom's alcoholism continued to worsen and our relationship was practically nonexistent, I felt marriage was the way out of the personal hell that my life had become. I became so engrossed in my plans for the future, I failed to see the depth of Mom's despair and pain. As my marriage drew closer, she became more and more desperate, often threatening suicide. She continually claimed I was her only reason for living. By this time she was mixing alcohol with prescription drugs. On one occasion she overdosed on sleeping pills. But since she immediately called family and friends for help, I felt this was

another ploy to draw attention to herself.

Late one night, a month prior to my wedding, I was sitting alone, reading, when I heard a noise in our basement. Dad kept a gun down there and I knew that the noise I heard was Mom searching for that gun. I struggled with myself for what seemed like an eternity. Dad was sleeping but fear of his being hurt kept me from waking him. A part of me willed her to find the gun and end her anguish and mine. I finally forced myself to slowly descend, wondering with each step what I would say or do. As I turned the corner, I saw her standing with a blank expression on her face, her hands behind her back. Somehow I found the strength to tell her I knew she had a gun and asked her to give it to me. She withdrew it from behind her back, pointed it at me and said she couldn't go on living, but she couldn't go alone—she would take me with her. We both stood there with tears streaming down our faces, hers from pain and mine from fright. I pleaded with her to give me the gun. My pleas finally woke my Dad, and he rushed in and grabbed the gun from her hands. Mom collapsed and kept mumbling that she wanted to die. My self-centered emotions were running the gambit from shock to fear to an overwhelming anger. I never once stopped to consider her unbearable pain.

Engulfed in my self-righteous cocoon, I rushed headlong into marriage. But instead of the escape I had envisioned, it became a continuation of the same nightmare. After six years, two children and untold heartache, the marriage ended. Mom's drinking was worse than ever and my anger and resentment toward her deepened. There finally came a two-year estrangement during which I cut myself off from family and God. *Help didn't come* but then I no longer expected it.

In time, I remarried to a man who understood my mother's pain and urged reconciliation. For his sake, I made the effort. Mom and I spoke occasionally but I made every attempt to avoid her calls. When forced to speak with her, it was with thinly veiled loathing and intolerance. Then one night, in the darkest hours of early morning, the phone rang. Startled awake, my husband rushed to answer it. When he called me to the phone, announcing it was my sister-in-law, I knew in the depths of my soul this was the phone call I had dreaded for years. Trembling so hard I could barely walk, I staggered to the phone and received the news that Mom was dead. She had passed out while smoking in bed and the resulting fire had consumed her and most of the house. The tidal wave of guilt which instantly engulfed me was overpowering. I sank to the floor, shaking and pleading—praying for the first time in years, "*No*, please God, *no*, not like this!" I'll never forget that tortured prayer, for it was born of guilt from knowing that all my life I had deliberately withheld from Mom the one thing she wanted more than anything—my love. I was desperate for someone to help assuage my guilt. *But help didn't come.*

She withdrew the gun from behind her back, pointed it at me and said she couldn't go on living, but she couldn't go alone—she would take me with her.

God's unconditional love

Time passed and my guilt and anger continued to grow. Futilely I tried to put these feelings to rest as my life continued its downhill slide. In desperation I finally turned back to God. This time my prayers were for forgiveness. As I studied the Bible, one Scripture in particular seemed to beckon: "Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). I visualized myself sitting in God's lap and felt his love and forgiveness enfold me. He absorbed my guilt and gave back love. He replaced my anger with understanding. He revealed to me that what I had perceived as acts intended to hurt me, were instead another soul's anguished cries for love. I came to understand it wasn't my love Mom sought but rather God's, for without this she could never truly find peace. For my mother, help never came, for she never realized that what she sought was there all along, had she but opened the door.

God continued to bless me with his wisdom and grace. With his guidance I learned the true meaning of forgiveness, the first step of which is the relinquishment of judgment. Jesus said, "Do not judge or you too will be judged" (Matt. 7:1). Once I surrendered the judgment, God filled the void left in my heart with his unconditional love. By projecting this love to others, I came to embrace innocence instead of guilt; forgiveness instead of condemnation. I found that no matter how bad we perceive another person to be, their actions are actually a manifestation of their own urgent need for love. God taught me to share with these people his greatest gift of all—his unconditional and eternal love. *Help had finally come.* ❑

Carol Vandable is active at Ballwin Community Church (A.C.) near St. Louis, Missouri where she serves as director of the church preschool.



OF FOOLS AND ANGELS

Joanne Hunter
Presque Isle, Me.

THERE'S AN OLD saying that "fools rush in where angels fear to tread." That may be true. It's just that angels never give the impression that they ever fear to tread anywhere. They're always making such inspired proclamations as, "Fear not!" Sometimes I've tried to heed that suggestion and managed to buy a lot of grief before I reaped any reward—like the time I painted the church door.

In 1989, I retired from twenty-five years of teaching and started to pastor a little country church. Inside, the sanctuary was attractive enough, but outside it had a way of almost disappearing into the scenery, like the class wallflower at a high school reunion. If you didn't know it was there, you'd drive by and never see it.

Some twenty or thirty years back, the highway department decided to modify a bad curve in the road, which made the road considerably safer. But when they were finished, the highway passed behind the church instead of in front. That's when it started to disappear. It became sort of anonymous—unrecognizable to passers-by.

The building had no steeple, nor any sign to identify it as a church. There had been a sign once, but repeated vandalism had left it beyond repair. A casual glance toward the building affected the mind the way cream of wheat affects the palate. The place was bland, innocuous, and practically without identifying flavor: white siding, white doors, white trim, black roof, dull green steps—not exactly what you'd call memorable.

After pastoring there about a year, I started wondering how to make the place a bit more attractive. I was staring at a snapshot of the church one evening when I was struck by a fantastically simple idea: paint the church doors red. Such a vibrant, symbolic color would surely add some life and character. The more I toyed with the idea, the more inspired it seemed to be.

There was a board meeting the next week. I prepared my presenta-

tion carefully. I found two snapshots which seemed to emphasize the plainness of the church and mounted them side by side. I left one unchanged, but on the other, I took a magic marker and tinted the white doors a marvelous crimson. I even added a few flowers under the window. It seemed like a nice touch.

At the meeting, I made an impassioned plea for permission to make this change.

"Go ahead," they said. "Paint it any color you like."

I wanted to be sure, so I took a vote. It was unanimous. But I didn't start painting. I had expected at least a little resistance. After all, the door had never been red before. A brief tremor of uncertainty flickered through my mind.

"Fear not," I remembered, and the tremor passed.

I waited—several months. Eventually, I bought the paint. It was a dashing red, bold but not brash. I carried the can into midweek meeting, set it on the table with a flourish, and showed everyone the color. There were some wise nods and a few kidding comments. I didn't start painting.

On Sunday morning, I pointed out the color to those who had not yet been privileged to examine it. More nods. More kidding. A couple of knowing winks. But I didn't start painting.

When I figured everyone had had time to get over the initial shock, I asked again if they were still willing for me to paint the doors that color.

"Go right ahead," they said. "Paint it any color you like."

"This is the color I like. Are you sure it's going to be OK?"

"Ayuh. . . if that's what you like."

I wasn't sure if they were sincere, or just humoring me. So I took another vote. There were no nays, although there seemed to be one or two abstentions. I didn't start painting. I was just a mite suspicious of those abstentions. I let the thought of red doors simmer a while on the back burners of my mind.

Spring warmed; but I didn't start painting.

Summer sizzled. I still didn't start painting.

Tom paused on his way out after worship one Sunday. "I ain't seen any paint on that door yet. Did you lose your brush?"

"Nope," grinned Jim. "You know how it is with these women folks. They think they can't work outside if the sun's shinin' too hot, and if it's rainin' the paint won't dry."

"You're both wrong. I'm just waiting for the end of blackfly season. I don't fancy getting black speckles on my new paint job."

At the end of July the doors were still a tired, scuffed white.

August kind of sneaked up and caught me by surprise. Fair week came and went. School started, and the neighborhood was strangely peaceful during the day. Soon the kids would be out of school for harvest recess. That wouldn't be an auspicious time for painting—too much "help." By the time school opened again, it would be too cold. If I was ever going to risk it, I had to get on with it.

One fateful morning I called my friend Lucy. "You want to help me paint the doors red today?"

"I'd be insulted if you hadn't asked!"

That first brush stroke was astonishing. I searched my memory for some scriptural reference about the penalty for blasphemy, but the only quotation that came to mind was Moses' word to Joshua: "Be strong and courageous." Well, OK. I could do that.

Lucy and I took two or three deep breaths and resolutely slapped on more paint. If either of us had been listening, we might have heard angel wings. . . backing off.

About the time the initial shock began to fade, the first carload of critics came by to kibitz. They weren't church members, you understand, just neighbors with a proprietary interest. They really believe it's their church. It's the community's only church, the one they don't go to, but might if they were looking to be married or buried. I wondered what sixth sense had warned them about the sacrilege taking place, but I was elated. At least *some*one realized that *some*thing was happening on our corner.

I never guessed that I was about to stir up a hornets' nest of a zillion buzzing critics.

"Don't you think that's awfully *red*?"

"Well, red usually *is* rather red."

"Is that color appropriate for a church door?"

"Think about it. Can you think of a color that's *more* appropriate?"

"I guess it's OK, but I think I liked it better white."

"Try to give it a couple of months. When you get used to it, you may like it better. Anyway, it's only paint. If everyone's still unhappy with it by next spring, we can always make it white again.

"Why on earth did you paint those doors that hideous color? Nobody likes it, but they're just too polite to say so."

"Well, I brought it up for a vote. . . twice; and they told me to paint it any color I liked."

Even the kids got in on it: "How come you and Lucy painted the doors that yucky red? That's the devil's color."

"I think you have that one wrong. If the devil has any color, it must be black, not red. Anyway, the members

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It Isn't Over *Until It's* Over, But *When* It's Over, It's Over!

Clayton Blackstone
Lewiston, Idaho

SOMETIMES, things seem to go on forever. That's how our kindergartner felt after his first day of school. Elliot cried as he lay in bed that night. We imagined the worst: a bully stole his lunch, his teacher embarrassed him or nobody wanted to be his friend. Instead, the prospect of endless years in the classroom overwhelmed our new student-child. He cried because he didn't want to go to college.

"You don't have to go. We only want you to do what God wants you to do." He stopped crying. We left his room congratulating ourselves at the ease with which we quieted his fears.

The sobbing started again within seconds—this time with greater intensity. We rushed to his bedside, uncertain of what had brought on the new round of tears. Between sniffs, he managed "God just told me I had to go to college!"

Things which go on forever

Sometimes things seem to go on forever—things like education. Seven years of elementary, three of junior high, three of high school. Then four years of college before braving the world of postgraduate education. After that our employers insist we attend one seminar after another. No matter how much we know, it's never enough.

Sometimes things seem to go on forever—things like work. We've a job to do. A family to support. A house to maintain. A yard to mow. Rooms to clean. Meals to cook. Clothes to wash. Take a break and they're waiting on the front steps as we turn into the driveway. No matter how much we do, there's always more which needs to be done.

Sometimes things seem to go on forever—things like maintaining relationships. We've marriages to preserve. Friendships to nurture. Families to sustain. Neighbors and co-workers to husband. Everyone wants a piece of us. We've little time to call our own. No matter how much time we give, we feel as if we're neglecting someone.

Sometimes things seem to go on forever—things like war and injustice, hunger and poverty, prejudice and intolerance. No matter how much we know, how much we do, how much we give, things don't always get better. In fact, sometimes they get worse.

Sometimes things seem to go on forever—especially bad things. Things

that bring us pain. Things that discourage. Things that break our spirits. Things that leave us feeling helpless.

The battle against dulled belief

And since things sometimes seem to go on forever, we begin to think it will always be so. We hear rumors—rumors about a coming again, a rapture, a return. We hear talk about gates of pearl and streets of gold—the place some call heaven. We're told sickness and death, disappointment and despondency, anger and severed relationships will disappear from our experience and be replaced by contentment, fulfillment, peace, and uninterrupted joy.

But we wonder. We wonder because we wake up every morning in the middle of a mess. We wonder because we're at a loss about how to make things better. We wonder because things on our planet are bad and keep getting worse. And God just lets them go on.

Sometimes we need to be reminded that God will eventually rule over his enemies. He "has sworn" the psalmist says (Psalm 110:4). He speaks and when he speaks, things happen.

When he speaks in history's opening scene, heaven and earth; sun, moon, and stars; trees, grass, and flowers; lions, bears, fish and birds; Adam and Eve appear. When he speaks on Ascension Day, his Son becomes King and Priest. And when he speaks at the end of time, the old will give way to the new, his kingdom will come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven—finally.

We say we believe but it's an *only kind of* belief. Delayed hope has blunted our sense of anticipation. "The frontline work of Christianity," writes Eugene Peterson, "is not against unbelief but against dulled belief."

Dulled belief. Oxidized faith. The scorching rays of life's summer sun—

next page

Just Say the Name

Lee Strobel
S. Barrington, Ill.

HERE IS A story about a prisoner who discovered first-hand the hope that comes when Jesus Christ absolves our past and assures our future.

Bob McAlister, at the time the deputy chief of staff for the governor of South Carolina, became a volunteer for Prison Fellowship after he became a Christian. In an article for *Jubilee* magazine, he described how he was visiting Death Row in a prison in Columbia, South Carolina, when he saw a stomach-churning sight in a cell occupied by Ronald "Rusty" Woomer.

"Rusty, his face the color of chalk, was sitting on the floor—motionless," Bob wrote. "Crawling aimlessly like so many drunks, dozens of roaches covered the walls and floor. But what froze my soul were the roaches crawling on the man—his lap, his shoulders—and such was his despair that he did not flick them off."

This thirty-five-year-old murderer of four innocent people, who was facing the inevitability of the electric chair, had sunk to the depths of hopelessness.

Bob wasn't sure how to react to this depressing scene. Finally, he pleaded: "Rusty, just say the name *Jesus*." Slowly and painfully, with all the effort he could muster, the nearly comatose inmate whispered the name of the Savior of the world.

And then Bob began to explain to him how Jesus is the God of hope. It was clear that Rusty was paying attention. At the end, when Bob asked if he wanted to accept Christ's offer of forgiveness, Rusty nodded. Through his tears, he prayed: "Jesus, I've hurt a lot of people. Ain't no way that I deserve You to hear me. But I'm tired and I'm sick and I'm lonely. My mama's died and I never got to tell her bye. Please forgive me, Jesus, for everything I've done. I don't know much about You, but I'm willing to learn, and I thank you for listenin' to me."

Bob returned the following week. "I walked up to his cell; it was spotless," he recalled. "Gone were the dirt and roaches and porno magazines. The walls were scrubbed, the bed was made, and the scent of disinfectant hung in the air."

Rusty was smiling and enthusiastic. "Bob, how do you like it?" he asked. "I spent all weekend cleaning out my cell 'cause I figured that's what Jesus wanted me to do."

You might read Rusty's story and say to yourself, "Well, he *needed* Jesus. He was a cold-blooded killer. But me—c'mon, I've never killed anybody."

Yet the Bible stresses that all of us are in a hopeless situation. We've all violated God's laws in one way or another. God has no choice but to be an honest judge and declare us guilty. He can't pretend we're innocent because that would be a lie. That's the predicament we face, and no amount of wishful thinking or blind optimism or personal dreaming can change it.

What would Jesus say to you? I could imagine him saying, "The choice is yours. You can pay the penalty for your wrongdoing, or you can accept My payment on your behalf, just like Rusty did."

It's my prayer that with a heart of repentance and faith, you'll just say the name *Jesus*. ❑

From What Jesus Would Say *by Lee Strobel. Supplied by Zondervan Press Syndicate.*

job, bills, education, relationships, community responsibilities, recreational opportunities, environmental issues, political campaigns, church programs—tarnish faith's luster. We need reminding. "Behold, I'm coming soon" (Revelation 22:7, 12, 20).

Liberating urgency

The words explode with urgency—like "Taxi! Taxi!" We shout, wave, get in, are on our way. For a moment we are fixed. One thing matters. Eugene Peterson reminds us that "this urgency is liberating, for it compels us to stay awake, deeply and earnestly aware of who we are and what we are doing, keeping us from trivia, that, like the threads of the Lilliputians, can make prisoners of us as effectively as any ball and chain."

Since things sometimes seem to go on forever, we begin to think it will always be so.

"Don't seal the book. Things are already beginning to happen," the angel says to John. "Pay attention. Jesus says, 'I'm coming soon'—remain faithful."

Stick with earth's real King during the onslaught of dragons, trumpets, seals, beasts, plagues, and a wicked woman John called the Mother of Prostitutes. Stay focused. Ignore the trivia. C.S. Lewis hits the mark: "The first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are going to be destroyed (by something terrible), let us be doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting with our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep. . ."

Watch for the trivia which imprisons us as effectively as any ball and chain. Pay attention to the prophecy. Do what we set out to do. Sometimes, we need reminding. "Behold, I'm coming soon and you'll get what you worked for" (Revelation 22:12).

Work which matters

"Excuse me. We're saved by grace. What we *do* doesn't matter nearly as much as who we *are*."

But it's not *either or*. It's *both and*. We are saved by grace to do good works and who we are shapes what we do. "Substituting theoretical concepts for acts of love keeps life at a safe distance," says Brennan Manning. "The Christian commitment is not an abstraction. It is a concrete, visible, courageous and formidable way of being in the world forged by daily choices consistent with inner truth. A commitment that is not visible in humble service, suffering, discipleship, and creative love is an illusion. . .' Everyone who listens to these words of mine and does not do them will be like a stupid man who builds his house on sand' (Matthew 7:26). If we bypass these words of the Great Rabbi, the spiritual life will be nothing more than *fantasy*."

Jesus reinforced his words with deeds. He ate with sinners. He paid attention to the masses. He washed disciples' dirty feet. He said, "If you want to know God, don't just pay attention to who I am and the things I say, watch what I do."

The A and Z, the First and Last, the Beginning and End, reminds us that because he is coming soon what we do matters. What we do gives form and substance to what we profess to believe. Our choices result in eternal consequences.

Those who take their stand with the Living One "may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates of the city." Those who side with the Dragon and the Mother of Prostitutes will live a dog's life. To the Jew, dogs were unclean animals. No good Jew pampered and petted the animal we consider "man's best friend." They lived outside city walls and fed from garbage dumps. Sometimes we need reminding that we can't act like dogs and expect to be treated like sheep. "Behold, I'm coming soon. Come. Drink."

Carpe Diem

The morning Star announces the end to darkness and the advent of dawn. Days of tribulation will end. The Dragon will cease its fire-breathing ways. The Mother of Prostitutes will no longer drink the blood of the saints. Wars will cease. Famines disappear. Plagues claim their last victim.

In the closing lines of the book we know as *The Revelation*, Jesus urges us to resist the temptation to yield to despair. He reminds us that in spite of all that's wrong with the world, in spite of everything bad that seems to go on forever, his invitation stands: "Come and drink."

Savior, Spirit, Bride say, "Come!"

Watch for the trivia which imprisons us as effectively as any ball and chain.

The times of spiraling bad news which seem to never end hide moments of opportunity. For years, I've thought of time simply as *chronos*: seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, years. A thing to be measured by clocks and calendars, schedules and appointments. My watch ordered my days. My DayTimer gave them meaning. The busier I got, the more important and needed I felt.

But I failed to comprehend *kairos*: the stuff of which my time is made.

What God puts between the increments of measurement. Opportunities to sip the water of life. Moments to be dazzled by the unexpected. Moments of coming. Moments of inviting others to come, drink with me.

Jesus invites us to seize the day. To seize it in spite of Dragon, famine, plague, trumpet, seal, and Mother of Prostitutes. To seize it in the midst of suffering. To seize it because he is coming—soon! To seize it because wedding supper, new heaven and earth, new Jerusalem, and river of life are as real as the bad which seems to never end.

The times of spiraling bad news which seem to never end hide moments of opportunity.

Maranatha

"Is everything sad going to come untrue? What's happened to the world?" Sam asked Gandalf in J.R.R. Tolkien's fairy tale, *The Return of the King*.

"'A great Shadow has departed.' Gandalf laughed, and the sound was like music or like water in a parched land; and as he listened the thought came to him that he had not heard laughter, the pure sound of merriment for days upon days without count. It fell on his ears like the echo of all the joys he had ever known. But he himself burst into tears. Then, as a sweet rain will pass down a wind of spring and the sun will shine out the clearer, his tears ceased, and his laughter welled up, and laughing he sprang from his bed.

"'How do I feel?' he cried. 'Well, I don't know how to say it. I feel, I feel'—he waved his arms in the air—'I feel like spring after winter, and the sun on the leaves; and like trumpets and harps and all the songs I have ever heard.'" Sometimes we need to be reminded that there's a world of vivid colors to come which makes this one black and white by comparison.

"Yes, I'm coming soon!"

So be it! Maranatha. Come Lord Jesus!

John concludes his book with the language of desire. Come in power and glory. Come to make all things new. Come to wipe tears from our eyes. Come with streets of gold and gates of pearl. But until then, come in any way that will remind us of your presence and promise. Come—renew our passion. Come—revive our hope.

Maranatha! ❑

Clayton Blackstone is pastor of the Church of New Hope (A.C.) in Lewiston, Idaho, and a contributing editor to the Advent Christian Witness.

Fools and Angels

from page 11

of the church voted on it."

Hardly a week went by without two or three remarks. I began to get just a tad exasperated.

In December, I hung wreaths on the doors. I was pleased at the effect. Other folks must have liked it too. Or maybe no one wanted to be a scrooge during the Christmas season. In January the hassles started again. I listened to folks from our church, folks from other churches, folks from no church. I listened, but we all knew that I couldn't repaint the doors during the winter. For the moment, the dye was cast.

Spring finally breezed into Castle Hill. The afternoons grew warmer. I waited. I expected to come by and see the doors had been painted white again, but summer eased by and although there were still volunteer critics, there were no volunteer painters.

I put an end to all of it the Saturday we had our fall meeting. When it was time for new business I stood up.

"I think the church ought to have a steeple. And there's no sense having a steeple if we don't have a bell. So I've been wondering, if I find a bell and give it to the church, can we build a steeple to put it in?"

The meeting erupted into several heated conversations. But eventually they said, "Sure. If you can find a bell, we'll build a steeple." I suspect they figured I'd never find one.

Well, we saw a lot of changes and heard a lot of complaints before we dedicated the steeple the next fall, but not about red doors. Some folks thought we'd never get a steeple built. But we did. Some were sure that the weight of the steeple and bell together would be too much and the whole thing would fall through the roof. But it didn't.

We had a full house for the dedication service. Everyone who wanted to, old or young, had the chance to pull the rope and ring the bell. Our church folks overflowed with pride. They lingered a long time, grinning and swapping stories of how it had all come about.

That was two years ago. This fall we expect to dedicate a new addition to the building. It's a nice little fellowship hall with a new kitchen and bathroom, all handicapped accessible. It's not quite finished inside yet, but what's there is all paid for.

It's been two years since anyone has mentioned the color of the doors. Maybe, if you can't be an angel, it's OK to be a fool once in a while. ❑

Joanne Hunter serves as pastor of the Castle Hill Advent Christian Church in northern Maine.

Volunteer Sharing

Merrilyn Towne
San Diego, Calif.

THE HOSPITAL atmosphere was refreshing after my absence of several months. Even the volunteer's room seemed warm and friendly with busy, hurrying helpers. Everyone contributing to the smooth running of staff, pharmacy, surgical unit, X-ray department, and all that goes into a well-run operation.

It had been some time since I'd returned to visiting the first-day patients and trying to ease their concerns. The air of busyness and routine of activities was fulfilling.

Many days had passed since the loss of my spouse on Thanksgiving evening. Sometimes the loss fresh and grievous; other times it was like a dream. After forty-five years of marriage the sudden passing of my friend and partner almost cut like a knife. There had been so much to think about and to take care of that it was overwhelming at times. Because I have a wonderful support group of married children, as well as siblings and church family, my grieving seemed to have gone forward. Thus, here I was returning to a job that I really enjoyed.

The admitting folder was there on the shelf where it belonged. Going down the list I found the patients' names, room numbers, doctors' names as well as religious preference. After highlighting each one, everything was put into a rolling cart. Added to this were magazines and a welcome card with a small spray of silk flowers. This always brightened each person's eye. It... seemed to open doors every time.

This day I decided to begin my route up on the sixth floor on the south side. Following along, I soon came to Six North. This is the oncology area. Many patients here have gone through difficult therapy treatments, and some have had to return numerous times to finish their chemotherapy.

How many times I'd followed this way hoping to be encouraging and helpful to someone who might be frightened, bewildered, or wanting to talk with another person. Room 632 had only one occupant. She was anxiously watching the door. No smile brightened her face, instead a frown crossed her brow. My gift of a small spray of silk flowers adorning the welcome card seemed to help a bit.

Soon she shared her deepest concern about leaving family at home for an unknown amount of time. We talked and talked, finally agreeing that in this life many things are beyond our control. However, there is Someone who knows, who cares, and who promises to never leave us. How very close we drew as we each gave strength to the other. With my assurance of returning soon we parted and I continued my rounds. Each would remember this moment being stronger and uplifted for the day's events.

Certainly I'd been encouraged. Now each new patient with a particular story would remind me that we are vulnerable and need contact with others daily. It was now easier to continue going room to room giving a magazine here, a friendly word there.

My heart felt lighter, my mind clearer, my ability to share and reach out freer. This was a job that I enjoyed doing, so happily I proceeded on my way.

Yes, Lord willing, I would return consistently again doing my regular day. It's important to be there to be counted on. I'm blessed to be able to do something that I enjoy doing and I'm always blessed by the most surprising people. God has a variety of flowers in his garden especially in our southwest corner of the United States. Hopefully he will give me many more opportunities to remember that we each have another side to keep private or share, whichever we choose to act on. I'm hoping to remember the admonition, "do to others as you would have them do to you." With this in mind and his help each day, I'll surely make it through. ❑

I Hear You Call

I hear you call, O God,
And I know that I am not strong enough,
or wise enough, or faithful enough
to do the job.
But I hear you call.
And I remember all the miracles you've done
with the most unlikely of materials.
I hear you call.
And even as I hesitate, the awesomeness
of your self-giving love engulfs me.
I hear you call—and trembling, I respond.
Lord, here I am.
I give myself to you
in full and free submission to your will.
O God, be Lord of Lords, and King of Kings.
Come, reign in me.

—Joanne H. Hunter

Miriam Snow Priebe

I'VE BEEN THINKING about England's blind poet, John Milton. Most of us studied his poetry and maybe were required to memorize portions of it. Memorization is considered old-fashioned today. But I have never met anyone who was sorry that he had memorized a great poem. Instead, I have talked to many who still find enjoyment and help from those "jewels of the mind." Somehow the words of a poem learned early in life remain in our brains after other things are forgotten.

I had to memorize Milton's poem about his blindness when I was in junior high school. Milton needed his eyesight to write. What a terrible affliction it was for a man whose life's work required his eyes to find himself in darkness! Still he persisted in writing in spite of every setback. And that poem tells us why and how he did it. Those famous words, "they also serve who only stand and wait" have given strength and courage to people caught in seemingly hopeless situations down through the years. Those words have been ringing through my mind today.

All of us want to "serve"—God, country, others! I don't know a soul who does not desire to be useful and helpful. We don't all have the same idea of *how* we should be helpful or *to whom*. But it's important to everyone of us to be needed and to know that we are making others happy.

There are times in our lives when we feel useless—because of a lack of places where we can use our talents, because of our lack of talent, poor health, or old age. I have heard so many say, "What good am I to anyone? How can God possibly use me?" Many of these people underestimate their own value; but some are placed by circumstance into positions that make service impossible. These are the folks the poem should help. These are the people who, desiring to be helpful, can only "stand and wait." Milton says that they too serve.

All of us have days when we feel like we're "standing and waiting." Take courage at those moments. Listen to the words of John Milton, "His state is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed, and post o'er land and ocean without rest: they also serve who only stand and wait." ❑

Miriam Snow Priebe contributes regularly to the Advent Christian Witness. *She grew up in an Advent Christian pastor's family. Before their retirement, she and her husband Charles served in the episcopal ministry.*

Thinking Things Over

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

April

1 Pray that **Karen Rigney** will experience God's strength and presence as she engages in language study and serves with Advent Christian missions in Japan.

2 Praise God for the continued faithfulness of **Japanese** Advent Christian pastors and church leaders.

3 Pray that the Lord will use **Margaret Helms** to effectively communicate the gospel as she interacts with Japanese people in Ono Newtown.

4 Praise God for **George Teshera**'s opportunities to encourage Advent Christian national leaders and missionaries in his work as Asia/Pacific Area Director.

5 Pray that the Lord will prepare the way for **Tim and Ruth Fox**, and **Bill and Celia Jewell** to begin their work in India later this year.

6 Praise God for the pastors and church planters trained for effective ministry by the School of Evangelism in **Kodaikanal, India**.

7 As **Barbara White**, **Beryl Joy Hollis**, and **Marion Damon** complete their last few months in India, pray that God will richly bless their ministry.

8 The larger of our two **India** conferences is wrestling with some important issues and needs. Pray for God's intervention and will to be done.

9 As Advent Christian Missions prepares to open two new fields in **Honduras** and **New Zealand** in the coming years, pray for God's guidance and direction.

10 Praise God for a new ethnic Advent Christian congregation, the **International Pilgrim's Christian Center** (IPCC), sponsored by the Piedmont Conference and located in Charlotte, N.C.

11 Pray that God will use IPCC Pastor **Aloysius**

Okon to touch lives for Jesus Christ among first generation Africans in the greater Charlotte area.

12 Praise God for a growing commitment to **urban and ethnic ministry** among Advent Christians.

13 Pray that God will meet needs and touch lives through Advent Christian congregations in the urban areas of **Jacksonville, Fla.; Chicago, Ill.; Memphis, Tenn.;** and **San Francisco, Calif.**

14 Praise God for the opportunities that **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** continue to have to communicate the gospel to young people in the inner city of Memphis.

15 Pray that **Warren Prestidge** will sense God's presence and direction in his work as Director of Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

16 Praise God for the opportunity that **David Vignali** had to visit mainland China late last year.

17 Pray that God will meet the needs of Filipino Advent Christian pastors who serve Advent Christian congregations in the southern part of the **Philippines.**

18 Praise God for the new **Oro Bible College graduates** and pray that they will find places to effectively serve with Advent Christians in the Philippines.

19 Pray that God will protect **Rev. and Mrs. Ben Cleon Sr.,** while they continue to be held by one of the military factions in Liberia.

20 Praise God for the faithfulness of thousands of **Liberian believers,** including Advent Christians, who continue to serve Jesus Christ in that war-torn country.

21 Pray for **peace and reconciliation** within Liberia.

22 Praise God for Advent Christian congregations who support the task of world missions through **Penny Crusade.**

23 With **nine new Advent Christian missionaries** going into service in 1994 and 1995, pray that God will supply the extra money needed for Advent Christian ministries this year.

24 Praise God for the church-planting work that **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** continue to do in El Florido, Mexico.

25 Pray that the Lord will lead Advent Christian Missions to the right people for church planting work in **Mexico.**

26 Praise God for the exciting partnership that Advent Christian Missions and Mexican Medical Mission are forging in **Baja California.**

27 Pray that God will use the efforts of **short-term teams** from a number of Advent Christian congregations as they travel to Mexico, Honduras, and other locations.

28 Praise God that Jesus Christ is **alive today.**

29 Pray that God's **kingdom work** will expand as pastors, missionaries, and Christian people across the world communicate the gospel.

30 Pray that God will give World Mission Director **Harold Patterson** strength and wisdom as he oversees Advent Christian mission work.

Chapel continued from page 6

tectural investigation along with restoration efforts, were unleashed with a goal of restoring the Miller homestead. It came to reality in 1994, when over two thousand people (mostly Seventh-day Adventists) gathered on the property on October 22 to observe the 150th anniversary of the "Great Disappointment." A nationwide live TV telecast via satellite units on the scene produced segments featuring both the interior and exterior scenes of the chapel.

During the year leading up to the special events of 1994 much work was done on the chapel. The floor was refinished, the grounds were groomed, trees were either trimmed or removed and both the exterior and interior newly painted using both volunteer and professional labor.

Today, while new and modern church buildings are being built, the William Miller Chapel provides a tangible link with the past. From the antique kerosene lamps hanging from the ceiling and walls to the wood stove at the rear of the building, to the narrow pews with a maximum seating capacity of about 60 people, visiting Advent Christians can sense a bit of what it might have been like to worship in the early 1900s.

Hundreds of visitors come to the site each year. They can now visit not only the chapel and the nearby cemetery where Miller and his family are buried, but also the restored farmhouse and grounds. A visit to the site is bound to be an inspiration to any Advent Christian interested in their denominational heritage. Beginning in 1992, an annual "Adventist Heritage Service" has been held at the chapel in mid-June. Attendance and participation in the service has increased as the program has gained more attention.

Obviously the church of Jesus Christ is more than buildings and grounds. Nevertheless, this small chapel bears witness to the determination of a body of people who believed in something strongly enough not to be intimidated into retreating. It stands as a testimony to a man, a message and movement that changed the face of American Christianity. Advent Christians everywhere can be proud of this memorial dedicated to the man largely responsible for the preaching of the Second Advent of Christ, a vital element of our faith.

Our hope continues to rest on the return of the Lord. We can join William Miller in saying that we too have fixed our eyes on: "Today, Today, and Today until He comes." ❑

Floyd McIntyre is pastor of the Advent Christian Church in North Springfield, Vermont and Chairman of the Advent Christian Trustees of the William Miller Chapel.

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

It is a curious thing, this involvement of government and religion. The two institutions ought to be separated, but they can never be wholly divorced. Religion is too deeply woven into the fabric of our society. The relationship should be one of benevolent neutrality on the part of the state.

—James K. Kilpatrick

In this culture of false spirituality, feel-good religions, and New Age approaches, we're challenged to point to Jesus Christ and his call to become disciples. It's necessary to live consistent lives of dedication to Jesus if we're to be effective in presenting the gospel to an understandably skeptical society. Only by demonstrating a genuine faith tested through the crucible of this all-too-real world will we capture the hearts and minds of despondent people.

—Pastor Joe Pritchett, Bethlehem Advent Christian Church; Augusta, Ga. (Quoted from the Bethlehem Beacon, *November 1994)*

God built diversity into the fabric of his body of believers. And until we realize that, we'll find ourselves needlessly imitating each other's outreach efforts, wastefully duplicating some approaches while harmfully squelching others.

—Bill Hybels and Mark Mitteburg in Becoming a Contagious Christian

Apart from Christ, (our) alleged virtues are but brilliant vices.

—Brennon Manning

Classical Marxism believes that economic change, culminating in socialism, will transform the culture. The new Marxists, following the teachings of the Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci, teach that cultural change must *precede* socialism. Today's left wing shows little concern for the labor movement and economic theory, unlike the Marxists of the last generation. Instead, the left emphasizes *cultural change*. Changing America's values is seen as the best means for ushering in the socialist utopia. This is why the left today champions any cause that undermines traditional moral and cultural values and why leftists gravitate to culture-shaping institutions—education, the arts, and the media.

—Gene Veith Jr. in Postmodern Times

Along with trust there must be gratitude—the opposite of resentment. Resentment and gratitude cannot coexist, since resentment blocks the perception of life as a gift. My resentment tells me that I don't receive what I deserve. It always manifests itself in envy. Gratitude, however, goes beyond the "mine" and "thine" and claims the truth that all of life is a pure gift.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

We need. . . to ask ourselves, what are we banking on for our happiness and what would happen if it were taken away? If high income, physical beauty, the symbols of ease, and the right mate are what life is ultimately about, then these ought to be able to sustain us through crisis. But clearly they cannot. These things are not wrong in themselves, but they were never intended to be the foundation on which we build. They are instead the furnishings.

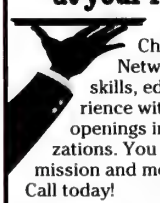
—Rebecca Pippert

In Other Words

How do we promote both truth and justice, in these days, in these times? For Christians, the answer is deceptively simple. It is the same answer for Christians in every era, in any world: We follow Jesus Christ. We believe the truth he has taught us. And that truth, when practiced, commits us to doing justice and loving mercy. Every generation is tempted to follow other messiahs, other truths, and we are no exception. Yet within every generation are those who have been faithful to the truth of Christ in the face of great difficulties. The question is, will we too be faithful? And will we do it. . .together?

—S.D. Gaede in When Tolerance is No Virtue

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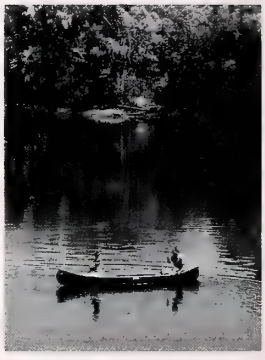
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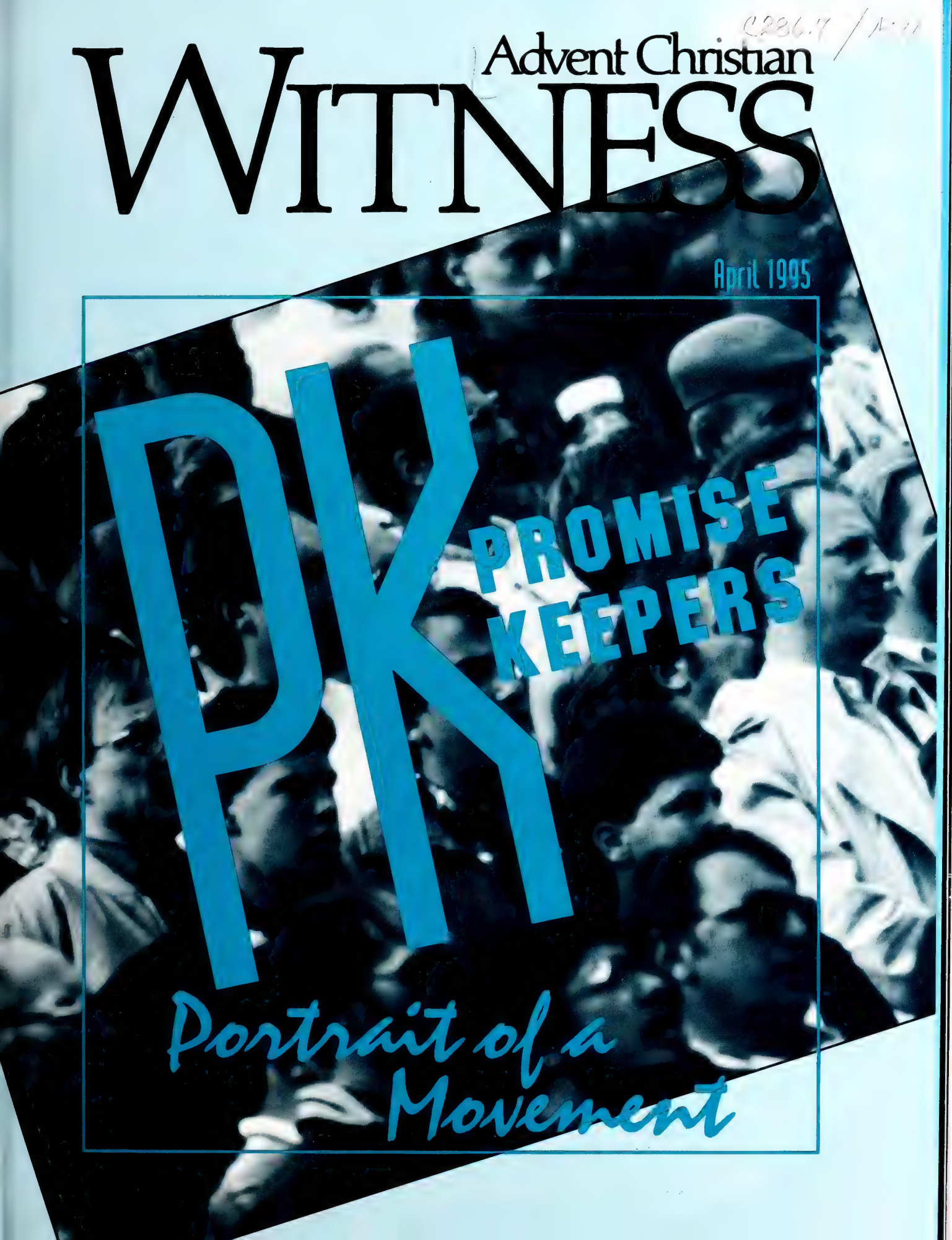
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Advent Christian
WITNESS

April 1995



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PROMISE KEEPERS
Portrait of a Movement

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photo by Jim Whitmer Photography

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Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy, Timothy Setzer, Linda Leavitt**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria



THOUGHTS ON THE SIX O'CLOCK NEWS

LIKE MOST native Californians, I've experienced several earthquakes and am aware of their powerful potential for destruction. So when Kobe, Japan, was struck with a 7.2 trembler in January, my thoughts immediately turned not only to that part of the world but to our Advent Christian missionaries and our Japanese brothers and sisters in Christ there.

One of my colleagues in evangelical Christian publishing is Joel Belz, the publisher of *World* magazine in Asheville, N.C. Joel's family is hosting a Japanese exchange student in their home this year and, needless to say, she was stunned to receive word of this terrible tragedy only 120 miles from her home. But what they saw when their family sat down to watch the evening news was an embarrassment for all who call themselves United States citizens.

We subconsciously relegate death and violence to a world that most of us will never inhabit.

In Joel's words, "On the second day, to our dismay, with reports of fatalities climbing first past a thousand, then over 2,000, and that evening exceeding 3,000, Dan Rather and Connie Chung led off with a report on developments during the day at the O.J. Simpson trial in Los Angeles. The earthquake got its first mention five minutes into the newscast."

Our fascination with celebrities

It's easy to dismiss an episode like this as evidence that the media is out of touch with the American people. But I think it's more likely that the opposite is true. Mr. Rather and Ms. Chung are simply reflecting what their audience surveys tell them— Americans are more interested in the O.J. Simpson trial than in events like the one in Kobe. We've become a culture fascinated with celebrities and entertainment. And O.J. provides better entertainment than Perry Mason ever could.

Perhaps it's our way of escape. We can watch the trials and travails of O.J. Simpson and other celebs and not have to think about the stark condition of our country and world. We live in a society where young people are killing each other on the streets of our cities; where politicians argue that abortion should be "safe, legal, and rare" while millions of human lives are slaughtered in so-called "clinics" across the United States; where thousands of lives are snuffed out by drunk drivers every year; and where, despite the advances of medical science, diseases like cancer, AIDS, and Alzheimer's take a deadly toll. Through O.J., we can subconsciously relegate death and violence to a world that most of us will never inhabit—the world of celebrity entertainers. With O.J., death becomes trivial entertainment. In Kobe, it becomes alarmingly real.

Some of you I'm sure are thinking, "Here it comes. The usual plea to turn off the television and do something else." I'm not going to do that. I'm not even going to ask you to ignore the news about O.J. Simpson. That event provides some good insight into serious problems that affect law and criminal justice in the United States. But remember that what television projects about the Simpson trial not only reflects our fascination with celebrities but distorts the reality of our world. Death and violence are not trivial and not limited to one small group in society. They're real and part of the fabric of our culture. As a Christian, I recognize that their root cause is sin and I'm prepared to face their consequences because of God's grace expressed through Jesus Christ. And as followers of Jesus, one of our tasks is to communicate the value of human life— every human life, to a world where all too often, that's seen as trivial and expendable.

One more note. Advent Christian mission-

continued on page 17

HOPE Recovered

Clayton Blackstone
Lewiston, Idaho

GLEN WARNER, a Seattle oncologist, tells of a University of Washington student diagnosed with terminal cancer. When they first met, she asked, "Can you keep me alive until I graduate?" She wanted to complete her education, which had been one of her goals.

Warner couldn't supply any medical certainty, but he offered hope. "Do you want to graduate? Then we can make it!"

After graduation, her request changed. "Can you keep me alive until my wedding?" She had become engaged and her marriage occupied center stage in her thoughts.

"You bet!" came the reply.

In a year or so she was asking, "Can you keep me alive until I have a child?"

Lately, according to Warner's former pastor, Bruce Larson, she wanted to know if he could keep her alive until she became a grandmother. Larson adds, "I wouldn't bet against it."

Hope! It's one of those big four-letter words. Something we often crave. A concept which frequently eludes us. Pie in the sky. The unrealistic rantings of a confirmed idealist.

We opt for *realism*-at least that's what we label our flirtation with despair. One confirmed fatalist put it this way; "The life of man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, toward a goal few can hope to reach and where none can tarry long. One by one as they march, our comrades vanish from our sight, seized by the silent orders of omnipotent death. Brief and powerless is man's life. On him and all his race, the slow sure doom falls, pitiless and dark."

Nothing like a little Bertrand Russell to send one running to the open arms of depression! But, without a doubt, hope dissipates faster than it evolves. We know it firsthand. We've been there a time or two. It's tough to maintain hope when you appear to be the only one in the marriage who seems to give a rip about staying together. A chore to keep going when pain accompanies every move your body makes. An unbearable challenge when your job measures a minus five on the fulfillment scale.

"We are truly the lost generation, huffing and puffing down the fast track to nowhere, always looking to the dollar sign for direction," writes Brux Austin. "That's the only stan-

dard we recognize. We have no built-in beliefs, no ethical boundaries. Cheat on your wife, just don't get AIDS. . .

"Where did I go wrong?" is the traditional wail of parents of kids-gone-wrong. The nineties version says, 'We gave him everything—clothes, a computer, a car, a college education.' Everything but a conscience. What good is lolling in your Jacuzzi in the beautiful backyard of your breathtaking home if you feel an aching emptiness in your innards—a chronic pain that all the wine coolers in the world can't numb?"

It's a terrible way to live. But, honestly now, just what does one hope in? Politicians tell us what we want to hear and then conveniently forget ever making the promise. Many of those we thought happily married get divorced. Years of education fail to provide clear-cut solutions to the problems which confront our culture. Even success and money fail to deliver the goods.

A road often traveled

I suppose it's small consolation but others have passed this way before us. Centuries ago an entire nation languished in despair. Israel clung to hope like a frightened cat dangling on a curtain. God's chosen people agonized over his silence. Four hundred years passed without a word from the Lord. Malachi delivered his last message for the record. No prophet had spoken for God since.

Throughout their history, God had promised a Messiah, one who would restore the nation to its position of greatness in the family of nations. Years passed without even a hint of the dream coming true. The nation pinned its hopes on some seemingly likely candidates. Matthias. The Maccabees. Potential deliverers came and went. And with every disappointment, the intensity level dimmed. It always does.

Each time hope disappoints us, recovery takes a bit longer. We become slightly more cynical. Less apt to put heart and soul into solving the problem. Trusting in a more limited fashion until we become hard. Crusted over. Prime candidates for what John Bunyan once labeled the "Slough of Despond."

Don't get me wrong. The Jewish people still held out hope for the Promised One. Anticipation punctuated their worship. Yet selfish motives mingled with the desire for Messiah. They longed for national greatness. Freedom from Rome. The opportunity to oppress those who oppressed them. Messiah simply afforded a way by which they could achieve their own ends.

They hoped, running after every Tom, Dick, and Harry who offered the slightest glimmer of potential deliverance. And their interest waned as quickly as it boiled to the surface.

Hope! The unrealistic rantings of a confirmed idealist. We opt for realism—or at least that's what we label our flirtation with despair.

An unlikely "Man of the Hour"

At first, he appeared to meet all the qualifications. The lame walked. The blind saw. The deaf heard. Five thousand men, plus women and children, ate a hearty meal of five pieces of bread and a couple of sardines.

People saw political conquest in their eyes—Roman armies wilting as energy flowed from his finger tips. They savored the prospect of full bellies without putting in a day's work. A likely candidate indeed.

But he seemed to lose his mind after that. He punctuated his speeches with talk of a cross, death, eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

People began to turn on him. We can't blame them. His words sound strange to our ears as well. He didn't fit their image of a proper "Man of the Hour."

But, on second thought, he doesn't fit ours either. We'd rather he help us ace an important test than listen to him discuss the first being last and the last first. We'd rather he help us secure a raise than hear his words about sacrifice. We prefer a bed of roses to suffering, the most likely instructor in the school of obedience.

So the crowd turned on him. The hero became the scapegoat. One day they welcomed him into Jerusalem with shouts and waving palm branches. Days later, they demanded his head. They felt betrayed, used, manipulated. In the name of religion, they coldly arranged his death.

We mirror their responses. We want him if he satisfies our lust for power, money, health, and position. We call him Lord until. . . until he

threatens our comfort. Until he asks us to be obedient. Until he refuses to yield to our preferences. Until he shatters our "Santa Claus" image of a heavenly lackey. Like the undiscerning Jew, we fail to realize that what we want and what we need rest light years from each other.

A surprise of the highest order

With his burial, hope died for his followers. No one believed anymore. They retreated. Closed themselves up, fearful of the same fate. Most planned to return to their old jobs. At his invitation, they left all to follow him. Now they kicked themselves for falling for his line. He sounded so convincing.

Then Mary brought an unexpected announcement. "Jesus vacated the tomb last night. He's alive. I saw him. . . touched his body. . . heard his voice. . . He's alive! Really alive!

Impossible. Improbable. Inconceivable. Beyond reason and belief. Out of the question.

The disciples ran to the empty tomb. They watched dumbfounded as he entered a room through a closed door. They ate food cooked by his hand and listened to his voice. At first they thought him a ghost. But their joy kept them from believing. They didn't want to get their hopes up only to be disappointed again.

The next forty days altered their lives forever. They left everything to follow Christ. Foot-in-mouth Peter preached the most powerful sermon in history. Doubting Thomas traveled to India to announce the good news of the "surprise of the highest order." John spent years in exile for his faithfulness to the Scriptures. Saul, a bloodthirsty Pharisee, became Paul, an aggressive ambassador of the Message. Stephen died for the faith. So did James, Philip, Matthew, Matthias, Andrew, Mark, Peter, Jude, Thomas, Luke, and a host of others.

George MacDonald's right, you know. "If you believe that the Son of God died and rose again, your whole future is full of the dawn of an eternal morning, coming up beyond the hills of life, and full of such hope as the highest imagination for the poet has not a glimmer of yet. No one who has not faith can hope."

Pretty amazing stuff. Denying transformed to dying in a little better than thirty days. Still we wonder: "Is anything in our lives worth dying for these days?" It's tough to keep believing. The challenges which confront us sent us scurrying for cover.

I like how Peter Kreeft puts it: "We are like flies crawling along a fingernail on the tenth angel from the left in the sixth row of angels in a Michelangelo fresco. We see a few loose threads of the backside of life's tapestry, and unless we are told by the Weaver, we can only guess the shape of the picture.

"But we have been told. Faith is simply believing what we have been told, believing the unbelievable: that God has the ace up his sleeve; that the worst the Devil can do is to contribute unwillingly to the best God does. . . Chance is not a word in God's vocabulary. Our providences may be merely general; God's extends to every hair on our head."

Keep believing. When you feel like calling it quits, keep believing. When it seems as if you are the only one who cares, keep believing. When it appears like all life's guns are aimed at your head, keep believing. When you stand alone, keep believing. When dreams and plans end in defeat, keep believing. When sorrow continually shadows you, keep believing.

God raised Jesus from the dead. That is enough.

Mike Bellah reminds us that "in a fallen world the innocent often get punished while the guilty escape. The

"The life of man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, toward a goal few can hope to reach and where none can tarry long. One by one as they march, our com[illegible] f[illegible] se[illegible] by t[illegible] len[illegible] ers om[illegible] eath. [illegible] a[illegible] powerless is man's life. On him and all his race, the slow sure doom falls, pitiless and dark."

—Bertrand Russell



righteous flounder while the wicked prosper. Good guys often lose and bad ones often win. If this world and time is all there is, then Christianity might not be such a good deal after all. In fact, we might as well consider becoming existential hedonists, living purely for pleasure. The apostle Paul knew this was the logical consequence of having no eternal hope: 'If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'

"But the dead are raised. Christ's resurrection proved that. He is coming again to redeem the fallen creation and fallen but saved man, including you and me. And when he does, he will also reward our faithfulness which has often been painfully lived out in a fallen world. Then, and only then, will it be worth it all."

Resurrection renews hope. Injects the mundane with purpose. Revitalizes sagging spirits. Makes the unlikely possible and the unachievable doable.

So keep believing. God will do what he said he will do. ❑

Clayton Blackstone is pastor of the Church of New Hope in Lewiston, Idaho.

He's Alive!

Carl Rundgren
Northwood, N.H.

NOTHING COULD have been more astounding! Just three days ago, they had seen their beloved Jesus led away to be executed. Though none of the men except John dared to show their faces at the crucifixion, they knew the deed was done. Within hours of being nailed to the cross, Jesus died. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus asked authorities for his body and provided a burial place. There was no doubt about it—*Jesus was dead!*

And now, the disciples were faced with the report of a woman who claimed to have been to an empty tomb. Jesus was gone! An angel had told her that *he was no longer dead, but alive!*

The rest is history. The tomb was indeed empty. No one had any explanation for that fact other than the one which caused the authorities the most fear. *Jesus is alive!*

If we look carefully at the historical facts, we find ourselves faced with a well-documented truth—so carefully documented that hundreds of thousands, if not millions, have gladly allowed themselves to suffer or be killed rather than deny it! *Jesus is alive!*

It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that fueled the spread of the Christian faith throughout the centuries. What motivated the early church—and the church through the ages—is the fact that they worshiped and served *a living Lord!*

It is the fact of the resurrection of Jesus, in part, that sets Christianity off from every other religion that has ever been devised. All who have ever led a religious movement in history are presently in their graves, awaiting the day when they will rise from the dead to give an account to the God who made them. *All except one!* While Mohammed is bound to his grave, along with Buddha and Confucius, Zoroaster, and Karl Marx; *Jesus is alive!*

The One who died on the cross in your place is the same one who said, *"I will never leave you or forsake you!"* There is no reason to be afraid of what the future holds. *Jesus is alive!*

Be careful not to accept by faith the resurrection of Christ and then relegate him to a form of death by inactivity. *Jesus is alive,* not for the purpose of being a figurehead, but to reign in your life and mine. If we give him the throne of our lives, we will indeed be able to *stand still and see the salvation of the Lord!*

Carl Rundgren is pastor of the Northwood, N.H., Advent Christian Church.

"If you believe that the Son of God died and rose again, your whole future is full of the dawn of an eternal **morning**, coming up beyond the hills of life, and full of such hope as the highest imagination for the poet has not a glimmer of yet. No one who has not faith can hope."

—George MacDonald



An interview with Brendan Vigorito

TWO YEARS AGO, people at the Attleboro, Massachusetts, Advent Christian Church sensed God's leading to help victims of the Midwest flooding on the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. Through their efforts, two tractor-trailer **trucks** were loaded with nonperishable food, clothing, Bibles, and other supplies for people hard hit by the flooding. But the story didn't stop there. Folks in the congregation began to see God's leading them toward a wider **mission**—one that would enable them to respond to emergency needs around the world with food, clothing, supplies, and spiritual tools like Bibles.

Brendan Vigorito serves as chairman of the missions committee at the Attleboro Advent Christian Church. He is a layman whose passion for missions was fueled several years ago by a short-term missions trip to the former **Soviet Union**. In Brendan's words, "I saw how the Lord used meeting people's physical needs as a way to open the door so that we could meet their **spiritual** needs as well." That's what the Attleboro Church has been seeking to do both at home and around the world.

Brendan owns a clothing store in the area. He and his wife Laurie have two children, Brooke and David. Eleanor Chew, the church clerk and chairman of the Heritage Conference church planting committee, interviewed Brendan and asked him to describe his spiritual **pilgrimage** and the expanded ministry that Advent Christians in Attleboro are having.

What influenced your decision to follow Christ?

As I look back now, there were many people who had been praying for me for years. I had an older brother who had been saved for years—who had been praying for me for years as well as many people who came across my path. One of the women in our church, Dot Phinney, had prayed for me for probably twenty years. They were the influences in my life.

Two-and-a-half years ago you went to Russia to distribute Bibles. How did this trip occur?

When I first came to Christ, the Lord used a book written by Rob

Linstead entitled *The Next Move*. Rob is a pastor in a church in Wichita, Kansas, and an author. I read his book and called to thank him for taking the time to write the book that the Lord used in my life. In our conversation he told me about the trip to Russia and invited me to go along with him.

Where did your vision for Attleboro's food distribution ministry originate?

The vision originated on my trip to Russia when I saw how the Lord used meeting people's physical needs as a way to open the door so that we could meet their spiritual needs as well. My vision was to meet people's needs whether it was a need around the corner or around the world.

How has the missions program affected you personally?

I've come to know God by experience as I have obeyed him and his leading. And He has accomplished his part of his plan and purposes through the people around us.

Tell us how the Attleboro Advent Christian Church has been blessed through this ministry.

The Lord has blessed our church through this mission in that we've encountered God personally. We've seen his provision for us in times when the Lord has called us to do seemingly impossible things. He has always provided the materials and people to accomplish his plan. We've seen the Lord bring us people we needed with specific gifts or talents. We have also watched some of those people come to the Lord and become disciples as well.

What types of unique supplies has the church sent and where?

In the summer of 1993 we shipped three tractor-trailer loads of food, clothing, canoes, and medical supplies to Midwest flood victims. At the same time, we shipped a trailer load of food and sun block to Guatemala. Since then, we have sent supplies to an orphanage in Romania, and Bibles to Dominica, an island in the Caribbean. Forty tons of supplies were sent to California earthquake victims. Haiti has received Bibles and sixty tons of corn. Recently we shipped forty tons of bakery supplies to a missionary who is starting a bakery in the Dominican Republic. Ninety tons of corn have been shipped to Rwanda. Currently we have an ambulance in our possession we are working to equip to ship to a children's hospital in St. Petersburg, Russia.

What has been the most rewarding shipment that you have coordinated thus far?

I consider all the shipments rewarding because with each one the Lord has blessed us with the testimonies we are able to give locally as well as the results in seeing important needs met. There isn't one that stands out more than another. Each project has had its benefits and we have seen the Lord's hand in miraculous ways. That is the real blessing. That's the real reward to see.

The Lord provided warehouse space in a unique way. Tell us about God's provision.

After we shipped three trailer loads of supplies to the Midwest in 1993, we could see the scope and di-





rection that the Lord was leading our church to become involved with Him in his work. We began to pray. As we realized we would soon outgrow the facilities at church, we prayed for a warehouse. After we had prayed for several weeks, a customer came into the place where I work and asked me if I were interested in buying a warehouse. I told him, no, but I was interested in having him donate a warehouse to us. The Lord opened the door and gave us approximately 15,000 square feet of warehouse space for free.

How does the church share the gospel with people who are receiving assistance from this ministry?

We do this in a number of ways. Many times the Lord moves people to become involved with us and work with us whether on a particular project or on an ongoing basis. Every time we start any project we begin with prayer, asking the Lord to touch each and every heart that comes to us. We also realize that each person who comes to work with us or to receive supplies is a person the Lord has uniquely placed in our path. And it is our job to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, while it is the Holy Spirit's task to convict these folks that they need Christ in their lives. It's our job to proclaim Jesus as Lord and Savior in doing everything that we undertake that the Lord has provided for us to do. Our first and foremost mission is to proclaim Christ.

What impact has this outreach ministry had on the church in the local area?

The Lord has provided people from the churches around us to come work with us. We have a number of churches that support us either financially or with individuals who come and give us a hand. Our belief is that the resources the Lord has given our church do not belong to us, our missions group, or our congregation. Those resources belong to God. Our church has always shared these resources the Lord has entrusted to our care with anyone in need and with other churches around us. As we are faithful with these resources the Lord has entrusted to us, it opens the doors of communication with other churches and this furthers the kingdom as a whole.

So this has helped to unite the area churches.

I believe so, as we have a good relationship with a number of churches in the area. As we begin a deeper fellowship with them, I also realize that the resources the Lord has given them are also available to us. Because these are kingdom resources, and we do not hesitate to ask a church with a particular gift or with something that could benefit us to share those resources with us.

What impact would you say this has had on individuals in your community who have received assistance?

We will know the final impact only when God's kingdom is established at the return of Jesus Christ. I know our work has had an impact on our testimony in the community. A lot of people have seen our work. They have seen the things only the Lord could do through us. It has made a tremendous impact on them because everyone hears all the negative stories. As we look around our community and around the world, the Lord

God At Work

Everybody in our church has shared in the sense of joy of helping so many people. This has given our church an ongoing sense of satisfaction and thankfulness to the Lord through an increased faith. Time and time again we have had situations arise where there were opportunities to do something or to meet needs that arose. Even though we've been faced with an inability on our part to be able to do them, the Lord has come through each time. There have been supplies donated that we could not possibly imagine that we or anyone else would ever have a use for. Soon we find someone that has a need for the exact items that have been donated. So it has touched a lot of our hearts in regards to faith.

Our church has also been helped by people in the community as they have seen the Lord work through this mission. They have been convinced of the integrity of the church and the strength of the Lord. We've seen people give their hearts to Christ as a result. One couple recently joined the church and another couple desire baptism. So, there are some tangible benefits to the church as an organization. The Lord gets the glory for what he has done and we are thankful.

—Rev. Russell Carle
Pastor, Attleboro Advent Christian Church

has been able to impact the world for his purposes through us. As far as the final picture, I hope we'll know when we get into the kingdom.

Do you know of anyone who has directly made a decision for Christ through this ministry?

There have been many.

Are there any other ministries that the missions committee is currently pursuing?

We're working at quite a few. We are in contact with a group of doctors in Rhode Island in regards to developing a network to adopt children and find homes for them. We are looking at how we can support other churches in our area as well as around the world with the different resources that the Lord provides for us. And we are constantly in prayer that the Lord would open our eyes to areas that he wants us to be involved in.

Is there anything else you would like to share about this ministry or the impact on your life or the life of the church?

It's been amazing to me to see how God works. I'm still surprised and I thank the Lord each time He does begin a work. I'm amazed with the resources that God has provided us with. One thing I praise God for is the media response in our area. Every time we do a drive or begin a work, we have had television and radio stations, newspapers and businesses calling and asking us what we are going to do. When we responded to the Midwest floods the Lord even got an announcement on the Red Sox game between innings. They made an announcement as to what we were doing and a plea for supplies.

The other area that we are looking to become involved in is to network with other churches—Advent Christian churches and churches in our area. Calls have come from pastors in the denomination about working together in joint projects. We feel the more we bring the Lord's people in, the more the Lord can speak to us corporately and we can accomplish the goals that would be difficult for us as individual churches or individual ministries. ❑





PK

Promise Keepers
Portrait of a Movement

David S. McCarthy
Portsmouth, N.H.

THE SCENE WAS straight out of a Super Bowl preview show: parking lots overflowing, charter buses disgorging passengers into a human tide rolling toward the stadium, hand-lettered signs reading "I need two" (tickets) hoisted high above the surging crowd. It might have been a mega-sports event except for several notable differences. It was 7:30 a.m. on Saturday and the throng was all male, many carrying Bibles. Welcome to Promise Keepers '94. With 62,500 registrations, the two-day conference at the Indianapolis Hoosier Dome became the largest gathering of Christian men in history.

Inside the Dome, U.S. Senator Dan Coats (R-Ind) declared, "I've been to a lot of rallies and seen a lot of sports events, but I've never experienced anything like this." Neither had Bill McCartney, recent head football coach at the University of Colorado. "God is doing something in the hearts of men that is so extraordinary and so supernatural that it's off the charts," Coach Mac told a press conference.

Promise Keepers began without fanfare in 1990 when McCartney enlisted seventy men to commit to mutual discipleship and pray for national revival. From that group came a vision for a men's conference and in 1991, 4,200 men met on the University of Colorado campus in Boulder. The next year they moved into the football stadium to accommodate 22,000 registrants and the Christian news media took notice. Men were finding help for real problems and families were being reconnected. In July, 1993, the football stadium overflowed with more than 50,000 Promise Keepers. The annual event was exploding into a movement. Local chapters were being organized and, last year, conferences in six cities drew an incredible 280,000 men.

Seven promises

This summer, Promise Keepers will reach more than 600,000 in 13 conferences. Plans are underway for a gigantic meeting in Washington, D.C., in 1996 that will bring together one million men for prayer and worship. At the end of this decade, the vision is to fill major stadiums in all 50 states with men who are making promises to God and one another.

What is Promise Keepers? Why is it exploding on the nation with such awesome power?

In a sentence, Promise Keepers exists as a Christ-centered ministry devoted to uniting men through vital relationships to become godly influ-

ences in the world. In order to make the intended impact, each Promise Keeper is invited to make seven specific commitments. At the conferences, well-known Christian leaders talk about each promise and call upon attendees to sign a card. Coach McCartney and his staff believe that the keeping of these promises will bring radical transformations to homes, churches, and individual relationships. Ultimately, they believe the nation itself will feel the impact.

The seven promises of a Promise Keeper include:

1. A commitment to honor Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, and obedience to God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. A commitment to pursue vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that he needs brothers to help him keep his promises.

3. A commitment to practice spiritual, moral, ethical, and sexual purity.

4. A commitment to build strong marriages and families through love, protection, and biblical values.

5. A commitment to support the mission of the church by honoring and praying for his pastor, and by actively giving his time and resources.

6. A commitment to reach beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.

7. A commitment to influence his world, being obedient to the Great Commandment (John 13:34-35) and the Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20).

A genuine work of God

These down-to-earth promises tap into hungers often felt by men outside the church. A reporter for the *Indianapolis News* found the conference to be "a serious discussion of what God expects from men in society—a discussion that becomes more and more necessary with every passing day."

Promise Keepers is successful, not only because its leaders understand the times, but because of the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit. Stories from the sessions reinforce the conviction that what we are seeing is a genuine work of God. One example is found in changed lives.

At the 1993 conference, Bud came forward to dedicate his life to Christ. He then returned home to southern California to recruit 50 men for the 1994 Anaheim Conference. Bud was struck down by cancer and died eighteen days before the '94 conference, but as he neared the end of his life something amazing happened. Although his speech was blocked by tubes, Bud tried to signal, holding up ten fingers. The doctors were puzzled, but Bud's wife interpreted his message. He wanted his friends to recruit ten more men for Promise Keepers. That same day he fell asleep in Christ.

At the Anaheim Conference, Bud's pastor told the story and asked those who had come because of Bud to stand. More than 250 men stood to their feet. Bud's son-in-law, an unbeliever, was sitting in Bud's seat at the stadium. When the invitation to receive Christ was given, the young man was among the first to step forward.

1995 Promise Keepers Conferences

Los Angeles (LA Coliseum)	May 5-6
Boise, ID (The Pavilion)	May 19-20
Washington, D.C. (RFK Stadium)	May 26-27
Houston (Astrodome)	June 2-3
Denver (Mile-High Stadium)	June 16-17
Indianapolis (RCA Dome)	June 23-24
Atlanta (Georgia Dome)	June 30-July 1
Seattle (Kingdome)	July 7-8
Minneapolis (Metrodome)	July 14-15
St. Petersburg (Thunder Dome)	Aug. 4-5
San Francisco (Oakland Coliseum)	Sept. 29-30
Dallas (Texas Stadium)	Oct. 27-28

Registration: 800-888-PK95 (7595)
Address: Promise Keepers, P.O. Box 1442, Arvada, CO 80001-1442

Each conference includes one session devoted to a presentation of the gospel and an invitation to make a public commitment to Jesus Christ. At the Hoosier Dome over 4,000 men came forward and were counseled. All received a standing ovation from the crowd, and some got even more. At several motels there were post-midnight baptismal services marked by spirited singing and the immersion of new believers in swimming pools.

The Holy Spirit continued to work as the men returned home. A group was returning to Aurora, Illinois, with a driver who was marked by a "non-caring attitude" on the way down. His actions had irritated the men, but they were so blessed by the convention they didn't notice him on the way back to Illinois.

The leader said, "Since it was already Sunday we decided to have our own church service on the bus. We sang and shared testimonies for almost three hours. We even wondered if we should ask the driver to slow down so we could get all the testimonies in!

"Then somebody suggested we take up an offering for the driver. We passed a cap that said 'Promise Keepers' and collected $100 for this guy. When we gave it to him he had tears in his eyes. He said, 'The $100 is great, but what I'm hearing from you is worth a lot more.' When we got to the parking lot we formed a circle and prayed, and even the driver got involved."

In an earlier era God used the Bible class movement to fuse men into a force that touched communities for him. Later, men's fellowships and prayer breakfasts registered an impact for the Kingdom. Once again God is at work and Promise Keepers appears to be part of his strategy for reaching and using men today. ❑

David McCarthy is senior pastor of the Advent Christian Church in Portsmouth, N.H.

Reflecting God's Image Through Restoration

Susan Smith
Monroe, N.C.

WHENEVER I think of restoration, the word "renewal" comes quickly to mind. These two fit together. When something is restored, being brought back to a former condition; it is also renewed, being made like new again. It is now refined. You've heard the advertising term, "new and improved." It's essentially the same product, but now it's much better. With us, we're still the same person, but our relationship with the Lord has grown deeper. Renewal can happen in all areas of our life and at any time.

A young woman had the opportunity to attend the Youth Conference at Berkshire Christian College many years ago. She was so excited. Even the long bus ride didn't bother her. The anticipation of a wonderful weekend became reality. As she sat among the many young people who had traveled from Advent Christian congregations up and down the east coast, a contemporary Christian band begun to play music. They played a song entitled, "Restored." The Lord touched her heart in a mighty way through the words of that song. She realized that in her Christian walk, she had "lost sight of the cross" and had forgotten that Jesus really died for her. Without realizing it, she had "wrapped herself up in herself and was trying to live her life without the Lord's help." Her Christian growth had been stymied because she left the Lord out of her life, trying to do it all on her own. At that moment, restoration and renewal began. She was able to start "communicating more with God and letting Him lead the way." Now being reminded daily of the price He paid for her. (The quotation marks indicate lyrics from the song.) Everything took on a new look. Her heart felt so full. Not only had she met new Advent Christian teen friends to stay in touch with, she had began a new walk with the Lord. Upon returning home, she shared during a church service about her restoration.

Listen to the sounds of God's creation: birds, insects, etc. Enjoy being still before the Lord and listening for a change.

Restoration in Psalms

We're all familiar with Psalm 23. Many of us have it memorized. However, the most familiar passages can sometimes slip by us. We need to pause and let the Holy Spirit reveal God's Word to us in a fresh way. As we look at this passage, we think of complete rest (a word found in the word *rest*oration).

Can you imagine not having a care in the world? Think of a big, grassy back yard on a spring day, lying in a hammock under a huge shade tree—no deadlines or responsibilities. In the background, you hear the sound of water flowing over rocks in a little brook. Listen to the sounds of God's creation: birds, insects, etc. Enjoy being still before the Lord and listening for a change.

It's difficult for us to stop and relax with our fast-paced, busy schedules. But the Lord longs for us to take time out for renewal and restoration. He holds everything in his hands and he will take care of all our needs. He sees the complete picture and knows exactly what will happen next. Take

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Strong Son of God Who Rose on Easter Day

Strong Son of God
Who bore the cruel ridicule of men,
Suffering their hate in agony and pain,
Beaten and bleeding,
Hanging from a cross,
You, Sinless One, took sin upon yourself,
Loving the world enough to die for all.
Strong Son of God—The Perfect Sacrifice!

Strong Son of God
Who left the darkness of the tomb behind,
Shaking aside the graveclothes, coming forth
Risen and radiant
Comforting those who grieve.
You, Risen Lord, who gave Yourself for all,
Loving the world, offer Eternal Life!
Strong Son of God—The Conqueror of Death!

Strong Son of God
Seated at the right hand of God,
Speaking for us—an advocate indeed;
Glorious and powerful,
Meeting our daily needs,
You, King of Kings, who intercedes for us,
Loving the world, offer Eternal Life!
Strong Son of God, who rose on Easter Day!

—Miriam Snow Priebe

Go the Distance

Mary Jane Stone

OUR SOCIETY is so scary! Violence abounds. Young children are shot. Abuse escalates. Corruption and greed thrives. What society sees as funny is slime. Books are full of perversion and terror. The twentieth century is the bloodiest in all of history. Whom can we trust? Where are we going? Does God care? Is anyone in control?

Our Bible study group is studying Revelation. Its author, John, and our contemporary media seem to be reading from the same teleprompter. I have noticed that John sees two levels of reality. Like a medieval theater built one stage over the other, the scenes alternate between action on earth and in heaven. The audience long ago could see both levels at the same time. Fascinating action today is happening in both places. One we see. The other we do not.

Christians know the beginning and the end of our history. Eugene Peterson writes, "This unaccountably unlovely middle is connected to a splendid beginning and a glorious ending. We are headed toward not merely a terminus but a goal, an end that is purposed and fulfilled." But the middle can get messy. We hunt for meaning in the mess.

The spiritual battle between earth and heaven involves each of us. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12). Eugene Peterson paraphrases that passage this way, "This is no afternoon athletic contest that we'll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels."

Jesus said, "Don't be intimidated. Eventually everything is going to be out in the open, and everyone will know how things really are. So don't hesitate to go public now. Don't be bluffed into silence by the threats of bullies. There's nothing they can do to your soul, your core being. Save your fear for God, who holds your entire life—body and soul—in his hands" (Matthew 10:26-28; *The Message*).

Focus on the exultation in heaven. The Revelation of Jesus Christ. Imagine singing in that choir, millions strong! In Revelation's "songbook" only the words are given, but they are jubilant:

"Salvation and power are established!
Kingdom of our God, authority of his Messiah!
The Accuser of our brothers and sisters thrown out,
who accused them day and night before God.
They defeated him through the blood of the Lamb
and the bold word of their witness.
They weren't in love with themselves;
they were willing to die for Christ."
So rejoice, Oh Heavens, and all who live there,
but doom to earth and sea,
For the Devil's come down on you with both feet;
he's had a great fall;
He's wild and raging with anger;
he hasn't much time and he knows it."
(Revelation 12:10-12, *The Message*)

We Christians would understand our world better and be less frustrated if we watched the "upper scene heavenly action" more and the earthly "lower scenes" less. Focus on the jubilation in heaven. The victory is already won! Satan has lost!

The Angel continued, "Don't seal the words of the prophecy of this book; don't put it away on the shelf. Time is just about up. Let evildoers do their worst and the dirty-minded go all out in pollution, but let the righteous

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Beware of GREEKS Bearing Gifts

Louis Lotz
Sioux City, Iowa

APRIL IS A sloppy little month, an in-between month, neither spring nor winter, a crack between the seasons, a month for slow, steady walks with slow, steady friends like my friend John, who wants to spend eternity in a duck marsh.

It seems there's this outfit in Des Moines that will pack your cremated remains into shotgun shells and blast you into your favorite duck marsh. "It beats sitting on the mantle in an urn, gathering dust," says John as we walk. "Say, you don't suppose this disqualifies me from the resurrection of the body, do you?"

It's nice to find someone who really believes in a bodily resurrection. Every Sunday we affirm our belief in the resurrection of the body, but do you truly believe that? Turn your eyeballs around and look at the beliefs stacked on the shelves inside your head. Do you see one marked "Resurrection of Body"?

Some people have problems with the idea of a bodily resurrection. We know very well what happens to our bodies after death. "Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim thy growth," wrote William Cullen Bryant, "to be resolved with the earth again... to mix forever with the elements." You may be ceremoniously planted in Sunnydale Cemetery or shotgunned into your favorite duck marsh, but sooner or later those ancient words of Genesis will be true for you: "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (3:19).

The "Immortality of the Soul" is a more popular belief. This is the belief that you possess an immortal soul, immune from death and independent of the body. When the body dies, the soul is released unto eternal life. The body is the cocoon; the soul is the butterfly. At the hour of death the soul is freed from its prison and flutters off into the sunlight. It's a comforting notion, a gift to the church from the ancient Greeks.

In biblical thought you are an animated body, not an incarcerated soul.

But beware of Greeks bearing gifts. The idea that we possess immortal souls is not biblical. For one thing, it makes death sound like a welcomed liberation, rather than "the last enemy to be destroyed." Look at Jesus agonizing in the Garden of Gethsemane; see him gasping, godforsaken, on the cross. Now, do you get the impression that he interpreted his death as a happy liberation, the simple shedding of an outer garment? I don't hear the sound of butterfly wings at Calvary.

In biblical thought you are an animated body, not an incarcerated soul. Your body is not a prison, excess baggage, a non-essential cocoon that houses a deathless soul. Genesis teaches us that body and soul are one. You don't just have a body, you are a body, and when you die, all of you dies.

You are an animated body. Your body is at the core of your identity. It is with your body that you relate to the world. Try laughing, crying, loving, praying, eating corn on the cob, or hugging your kids without using your body. Show up at church some Sunday without your body and see what kind of reception you get. Your body is what makes you you.

When I say I believe in the resurrection of the body, I'm not talking about the raising up of these particular muscles and bones, cells and chromosomes. These things will be dust. I'm saying I believe in the resurrection of what makes me me—my total self, my unique identity. This, I think, is what Paul had in mind when he talked about waiting for the redemption of our bodies.

Personally, I wouldn't want my cremains to be "kaboomed" into a swamp. But I see no theological reason why, if he so desires, my friend John shouldn't do so. Sort of a happy hunting ground approach to funeral arrangements.

"They'll do the same thing with the ashes of your favorite hunting dog," says John. I've known a few dogs worth sharing eternity with, but I think I'll pass. The company in Des Moines will also pack your ashes into memorial bowling balls and golf clubs. I'll pass on those, too. ❑

Rev. Louis Lotz is pastor of Morningside Reformed Church in Sioux City, Iowa. Reprinted by permission of the *Church Herald*, April 1993.

Distance

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maintain a straight course and the holy continue on in holiness. Yes, I'm on my way! I'll be there soon! I'm bringing my payroll with me. I'll pay all people in full for their life's work" (Revelation 22:10-12, *The Message*).

We are further into Revelation than we think. The more evil grows, the closer we are to God's decision—"Enough! No more!" God has it all under control and his plan is on schedule. We just aren't privy to the information.

Deciding whom we will serve is eternally critical. There is no neutral ground, no third option, no later chance. We belong either to God or to the Devil. This is what Max Lucado, in *The Angels Were Silent*, calls a "vest-button decision." "There are certain things in life done only one way. Buttoning a vest is one of them. Being ready is another. According to Jesus, being ready for his return is a vest-button principle. According to Jesus, start wrong on this first move and the rest of your life will be cock-eyed... Be ready. It's a first step, non-negotiable, vest-button principle."

Jesus said, "Don't quit! Don't cave in! It's all well worth it in the end. It is not success you are after in such times but survival. Be survivors!" (Matthew 10:22-23, *The Message*). In Matthew 24:13 Jesus states, "But he who stands firm to the end will be saved." John writes in Revelation 21:7, "He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son." If you hang in there and go the distance, you will be a survivor.

Max Lucado writes, "In Portuguese, a person who has the ability to hang in and not give up is *garra*. *Garra* means "claws." What imagery! A person with *garra has* claws which burrow into the side of the cliff and keep him from falling. So do the saved. They may get close to the edge, they may even stumble and slide. But they will dig their nails into the rock of God and hang on."

The God who *was* and who *is* and is *coming back* is about here. Hang on and keep those claws sharp! ❑

Mary Jane Stone is a retired schoolteacher who lives in Portland, Maine.

Editorial

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aries and nationals in Japan all survived the earthquake. And Japanese Advent Christian churches around Kobe are actively helping with relief. If you would like to help financially with their efforts, contact Advent Christian World Missions at (800) 676-0694 and they'll be happy to tell you how to help. ❑

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E

S E E K

K N O W

May

1 Praise God for his direction and leading in opening new Advent Christian mission fields in **Honduras** and **New Zealand**.

2 Pray that God will guide **Director of World Missions Harold Patterson** as he takes steps to establish Advent Christian mission work during the coming years in these two new fields.

3 Praise God for several Advent Christian congregations who have already been active in short-term mission efforts in **Honduras**.

4 Pray for the Lord's strength and power to work through several **short-term mission teams** from Advent Christian congregations going to Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

5 Praise God for Advent Christian pastors who faithfully serve our congregations in **Canada** and the **United States**.

6 Pray that God will open doors for **Tim and Ruth Fox** and **Bill and Celia Jewell** to begin their work in India this summer.

7 Praise God for the strong Christian commitment of Advent Christians in **Liberia** as they serve Christ in the midst of a war-torn nation.

8 Pray that peace will come to **Liberia** and with it an atmosphere of freedom for Christians there to proclaim the gospel.

9 Praise God for the lives touched for Jesus Christ in inner-city Memphis through the work of **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu**.

10 Pray that God will direct **Melchor and Jane Jandayan** as they proclaim the gospel to Filipino people in the San Francisco Bay area.

11 Praise God for a **renewed interest** in world missions among Advent Christians and for a number of folks considering missionary service within the denomination.

12 Pray that Advent Christian pastors and churches in **Nigeria** will sense God's power and leading as they proclaim the gospel to people in their nation.

13 Praise God for the students being trained for church planting, evangelistic, and pastoral ministry

through the **School of Evangelism** in **India**.

14 Pray that Advent Christian missionaries **Beryl Joy Hollis**, **Barbara White**, and **Marion Damon** will sense God's guidance and strength as they work with pastors, students, and church leaders in India.

15 Pray that God will provide direction and guidance for leaders in our older **India** Conference as they address some important issues.

16 Today we celebrate the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ. Praise God for demonstrating his love to us this way.

17 Pray that God's grace and mercy will be sensed throughout Japan in the aftermath of the January earthquake in **Kobe**.

18 Pray that the Lord will give wisdom and strength for **Karen Rigney** as she continues language study and interacts with Japanese people.

19 Pray that God will give **Steven and Ann Lay** refreshment, rest, and strength during their furlough time in the United States.

20 Pray for **Margaret Helms** as she communicates the gospel to Japanese people today.

21 Pray that Christians in **Malaysia** will be protected by God as they proclaim the gospel in this officially Islamic nation.

22 Praise God for the work of Advent Christian national missionaries in Malaysia—**T. Devairakkam**, **James and Mercy Devadasson**, and **Ruth Devairakkam.**

23 Pray that God will give strength and direction to Advent Christian missionaries serving in the Philippines: **David Vignali** and **Warren Prestidge**.

24 Praise God for the work that **Filipino Advent Christian pastors** are doing in ministry and leadership both within the congregations they serve and in their communities.

25 Pray that the Lord will guide students at **Oro Bible College** as they seek his leading for their future and prepare for the opening of first semester in June.

26 Pray for **George Teshera** as he provides encouragement for missionaries and national church leaders in his role as Asia/Pacific Area Director.

27 Pray that **your pastor** and his family will sense God's presence and strength in a special way today.

28 Pray for **Alberto Gomez** as he provides pastoral leadership for the El Florido congregation near Tijuana, Mexico.

29 Praise God that students at **Tecate Bible Institute** in Mexico are committed to reaching their countrymen in Mexico with the good news of Christ's love.

30 Pray for God's leading as Advent Christian World Missions seeks new national workers for the **Mexico** field.

31 Praise God that our **salvation** comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

Restoration continued from page 14

time out each day to meet with him in the "green pastures," beside the "quiet waters." This can be done at any time: while driving in your car (that's how I stay calm in the wild traffic around Charlotte); doing housework, or during your lunch hour at work. Seize whatever moment you have with God. Be creative.

Relating to God

The second passage, Psalm 51:10-13, is one of my favorite Scripture passages and is underlined in my Bible. These verses clearly reflect a desire to be restored to a right relationship with the Lord. Here David asks God to make his heart clean again, remove sinful desires, and bring back the joy of his salvation. Certainly, this can be our daily prayer—asking God to create in us a clean heart and a right spirit. Reflection will help our thoughts each day to be those that would glorify God. Whenever we're not looking to the Lord, we lose some of the joy that our salvation brings. It's easy to see that if we continue in this pattern, we lose all our joy.

Think back to the day you asked Jesus to come into your heart. It's hard to describe in words the joy, peace, happiness you felt. You wanted to tell the whole world. You may have felt an urgency to do this.

Through being restored and renewed, we bring back that feeling and, more importantly, we see the need to share it with others. In doing this, we can bring others to Christ (as it says in verse 13). Therefore, our personal renewal and restoration reflects God's love to us and shows this to those around us.

Have you been too caught up in your daily routine to relax and reflect on the Lord? Are you pushing him farther away, saying, "I'll get to it later?" Is something bothering you—stealing the joy of your salvation? Let God take that burden away. Right now, ask God to restore and renew you. He will bring you back to a new and better relationship with him. You'll be free to enjoy the beauty of God's everlasting love for you. Then go out and share it. As you show others how God has restored you, it will be a tremendous witness for him. So many people are hurting secretly. They want to find that peace that comes only through a right relationship with God. Don't keep that joy from others. Times of restoration and renewal are much needed today. ❑

Susan Smith is a member of Shiloh Advent Christian Church in Monroe, NC. She and her husband Breck have two children—Jessica (age 14) and Fielding (age 8). Susan has been WHFMS President for the past six years, Sunday school department secretary for six years, and recently became an assistant YWA leader. She also works part-time as a preschool teacher for one-year-olds. This article is excerpted from the 1995 WHFMS Program Kit.

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

Practicing God's presence is the act of remembering him. When you walk along a beach or lakeshore, remind yourself that God is thinking about you in love.

— Margaret Smith

If we are going to be happy, we must begin by confessing that our selfish pursuits are not Christ-centered. And then we must seek to balance our ambitions with an appropriate concern for others.

—Archibald Hart

Sit down with a group of evangelicals these days and you will discover that they are petrified to express their faith. How odd, we may think, since they live in a society where such freedom is protected by law. But their reticence is not odd at all when we consider that one of our culture's deepest values is tolerance, and that value is embedded in a relativistic worldview. To assert truth in such an environment is blasphemy. Evangelists are the heretics of our age.

—S.D. Gaede in *When Tolerance is No Virtue*

God doesn't send the hurts but he sees them coming. He could protect us but He knows that the pain will drive us to him. Suffering kills us—shatters the illusion that we're alive apart from God—and pushes us closer to him.

— David Roper

It is a curious thing, this involvement of government and religion. The two institutions ought to be separated, but they can never be wholly divorced. Religion is too deeply woven into the fabric of our society. The relationship should be one of benevolent neutrality on the part of the state.

—James K. Kilpatrick

In contemporary society our Adversary majors in three things: noise, hurry, and crowds. If he can keep us engaged in "muchness" and "manyness," he will rest satisfied. Psychiatrist C.G. Jung once remarked, "Hurry is not of the Devil, it is the Devil."

—Richard Foster in *Celebration of Discipline*

Godly patience and wisdom are needed for us to know why God has placed us where we are. God often works best through our personal powerlessness.

—Tom Eisenman

The great message that we have to carry, as ministers of God's Word and followers of Jesus, is that God loves us not because of what we do or accomplish, but because God has created and redeemed us in love and has chosen us to proclaim that love is the true source of all human life.

— Henri Nouwen

The Christian view of death—as of life—is very different from humanism's. Death is a consequence of sin, and sin is "the sting of death" (1 Cor 15:56). The church has always rightly emphasized knowing how to die, but that does not make death a friend. In the absolute sense, there are no good deaths. Death is the enemy, the last enemy to be destroyed (1 Cor 15:26). The good-death people know nothing of life, have small regard for it, and embrace the enemy as if it were a friend. But in Christian perspective the only comfort in death comes from the assurance of resurrection.

—Herbert Schlossberg

In Other Words

Christianity in America long ago ceased being a firsthand experience. We now experience our Christianity vicariously. We don't *live* the Christian life, we watch others live it. We don't experience God, we read about those who experience God. We no longer *do* mission work, we *support* mission work, We no longer evangelize, we hire evangelists. We no longer give our lives to the needy, we give a week to the needy. We no longer work on our marriage, we go to a seminar on marriage. The majority of the people who followed Jesus were just like that. They watched him, listened to him, applauded him, ate with him. Nothing like a good Jesus to keep them entertained. The same thing is happening today. This country has millions of people who believe in Christianity. They watch it, talk about it, televise it, sing about it, financially support it, and write about it. There's just one problem—nobody's *doing* it.

— Mike Yaconelli in *The Door*



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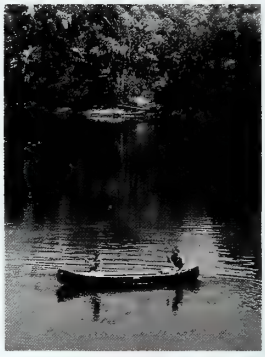
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May 1995

The New Age



Sign of the End Times?

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collage by Andy Bjorklund

Volume 43, Number 4

Advent Christian Witness

Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy, Timothy Setzer, Linda Leavitt**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria



Fifty Years: Legacy of a Martyr

MAY 1945. Germany and much of Europe smoldered in ruins. The Nazi government Adolf Hitler promised would last a thousand years had finally been crushed, although at the cost of millions of lives. And the world began to discover the unspeakable horror that had been rumored for several years—six-million Jewish people and countless others had been systematically slaughtered.

Some have asked, "Where were the churches?" during Hitler's bloody twelve-year rule. Sadly, most of them were co-opted by the fuhrer's "German Christian" crusade—a movement designed to destroy the Christian faith and make Nazi political and social ideology the heart of the church's message.

"The only man who has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who has left all to follow Christ."

"I have no right"

But some Christians in Germany refused to compromise. And one of their number would be executed, just one week before the Allies could liberate the concentration camp where he was held. Dietrich Bonhoeffer would choose to follow Jesus Christ and not Adolf Hitler. As the 1930s began, Bonhoeffer was seen as a rising star by many. He was on the fast-track both in the academic world and the church. At age 21, he completed his doctoral dissertation at the University of Berlin and in 1930, he spent a year of study in New York City. While there, he got involved in the ministry of an African-American congregation in Harlem. Bonhoeffer's commitment to human rights and racial equality was solidified by that experience. And it would set the stage for his opposition to Nazi anti-Semitism. The young Bonhoeffer was one of few people who early on understood that Hitler and the National Socialists wanted to build a society without God, based totally on human will and power. Nazi ideology was pure idolatry and the church, in Bonhoeffer's view, was obligated to oppose the state when they sought to crush people solely because of their ethnic or religious background.

Just before World War II began, Bonhoeffer fled to the United States with the help of some American friends. But he sensed God's will was for him to be in Germany. "I shall have no right," Bonhoeffer wrote to Reinhold Niebuhr, "to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people." So he went home. He pastored a small Confessing Church, (The Confessing Church was a network of congregations that opposed Hitler) and became active in the German underground. Unfortunately, he never got the opportunity to help rebuild Germany. On April 5, 1943, Bonhoeffer was arrested. After two years in several Gestapo prison camps, Gestapo chief Hienrich Himmler issued a special order and Bonhoeffer was executed at the Flossenburg concentration camp. A week later, Allied soldiers liberated the camp.

A martyr's influence

Fifty years after his death, this twentieth-century martyr can teach American Christians some valuable lessons. Bonhoeffer reminds us that the Christian life is not always successful and prosperous, that following Jesus Christ sometimes brings hardship and struggle. Being faithful to Jesus Christ can require us to stand against the popular direction of society or against laws that are fundamentally unjust.

Bonhoeffer also challenges us to see that our ultimate loyalty is not to any tribe, human government, or state; but to God's kingdom. "The only man," Bonhoeffer writes in *The Cost of Discipleship*, "who has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who has left all to follow Christ."

Fifty years ago, the Nazis and their evil designs for the world were crushed. As an American, I'm thankful for the many young men who

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Jim Whitmer photo



HOPE *for those who* Hurt

Bob Mayer
Charlotte, N.C.

HOSPITAL dramas are the latest network television fad— "E.R." "Chicago Hope." Even Dick van Dyke has gotten into the act playing a doctor who moonlights as a crime solving sleuth. But television does not do justice to the complexity of life in hospitals like Memorial Medical Center in Jacksonville, Florida, where veteran Advent Christian pastor Ken Olsen has worked as Director of Pastoral Care for the past five-and-one-half years. He represents one of a growing number of Advent Christian pastors who serves in ministry settings outside the local parish.

When I asked what drew him toward hospital chaplaincy, Rev. Olsen responded that he had always been vitally interested in hospital ministries while serving Advent Christian congregations in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Florida. "I had served in a number of settings as a volunteer hospital chaplain," according to Rev. Olsen, "and when I came to Florida to serve the West Jacksonville Advent Christian Church, my interest in hospital ministry blossomed." And after thirty years in pastoral ministry including thirteen years at West Jacksonville, he decided to enter hospital chaplaincy full-time.

A unique type of ministry

Unlike the local church, the hospital is not a preaching setting. While effective local church ministry requires a combination of preaching and pastoral skills, the most important skill that Rev. Olsen uses in his work is pastoral care. "My job as a chaplain-counselor is to allow the people I come in contact with—patients and staff—to be themselves, and allow them to talk as they want to talk and to offer whatever care as may be needed." Effective ministry with hospital patients and staff means allowing them to set the agenda and in Rev. Olsen's words, "trusting the Holy Spirit to help them to come to an understanding of where they need to be." Doing that not only involves being a good listener but requires a personal sensitivity to the Spirit's leading.

But Rev. Olsen's work involves more than counseling with patients. "My task," according to Rev. Olsen, "is to head the department that cares for the spiritual needs of patients, their families, and staff members at Memorial Hospital." And because chaplaincy involves working in an interdenominational and interfaith context, Rev. Olsen sees his role as assisting them in their spiritual progress. And that's been a positive experience for him. "My faith is strongly evangelical and Advent Christian," in Rev. Olsen's words, "but in this setting, I've discovered that there are people of other Christian faiths who share so much in common with us. You begin sharing and talking about the Lord with them and even though they're Baptist, Methodist, or Catholic, they're with you one-hundred percent both in their view of God and in their relationship with Christ."

Caring for the spiritual needs of patients and staff at Memorial Medical Center is done in a variety of ways.

Rev. Olsen trains and oversees twenty volunteer chaplains who go room to room offering spiritual support to hospital patients. The volunteers are pastors and laypeople from several denominations and include two Advent Christian pastors from the West Jacksonville congregation. While the program is interdenominational and interfaith, Rev. Olsen has had opportunity to train several Advent Christian volunteers. One of those volunteers, current West Jacksonville pastor Sam Warren, speaks highly not only of the opportunities for ministry but of what he's learned as part of the volunteer program. "Being a volunteer chaplain," in Rev. Warren's words, "has been challenging and rewarding. It's helped me get a sharper focus on needs in our community. Some of the patients I visit don't have a pastor and they appreciate someone taking time to listen to and pray with them."

Rev. Ken Olsen is establishing a beachhead for compassionate Christian ministry in a Jacksonville, Florida, hospital.

Pastor Warren also appreciates the quarterly meetings where the volunteers discuss issues and situations that regularly come up in hospitals. "At one meeting, we were discussing various emergency hospital codes," according to Rev. Warren. "We heard "code-five" (meaning a life-threatening emergency) broadcast over the hospital's public-address system. And Ken immediately took the group to the floor where the emergency was taking place. We had the opportunity to observe firsthand how the staff responds in those situations and I gained some good insights that have helped me in ministry."

Moral and ethical issues

Hospital chaplaincy also involves dealing with moral and ethical issues that have direct bearing on the hospital setting. Rev. Olsen trains hospital staff in handling ethical issues and as a member of the hospital ethics committee consults with doctors, nurses, and administrators when decisions about treatment involve ethical and moral concerns.

What issues demand the most attention in hospitals like Memorial Medical? Rev. Olsen mentioned three: advanced directives, disagreements between doctors and family members regarding patient treatment, and decisions concerning whether some types of treatments should be done or not. That last area often involves life-and-death decisions and in Rev. Olsen's words, "They're not easy. Sometimes a physician will call and say, 'Look, I'm torn about this. Could we gather the ethics committee for a consultation?'" The ethics committee will then meet and make an independent recommendation. That happens too when the committee is called on to mediate a disagreement between the patient's family and doctor. Treatment decisions in Rev. Olsen's words, "are always the final call of the patient with the doctor, but we try to provide moral and ethical guidance to the parties involved."

These issues ultimately affect all of us. "I think many of our people are unaware of the real pain out there,"in Rev. Olsen's words. "I have patients and families who come to the emergency room and weep because they never thought this could happen to them." To avoid that, he encourages individuals to seriously consider some form of advanced care directive that will give doctors and family members guidance as to their treatment wishes. "I recommend living wills with a surrogate" according to Rev. Olsen. "But it's important for people, especially if they don't choose to have a living will or another form of advanced care directive, to talk with a close family member, their lawyer, or their doctor about what they want to see done. That sort of communication will bear just as much weight as a living will, at least in this state."

Rev. Olsen encourages pastors and congregations to address issues surrounding death and suffering from a Christian perspective. Sermons, Bible studies, membership classes, and other special gatherings can be used to help people wrestle with these issues. "The moral, ethical, and financial issues surrounding health care will grow more complex and pastors will have to take a more active role in helping their people understand what that means," according to Rev. Olsen.

He recognizes that addressing issues relating to suffering and medical ethics will stretch many pastors and church leaders. "One of the things pastors discover when they come out of Bible college or seminary is that their education didn't prepare them for some of the major issues that come along." That means pastors not only must engage in reading and continuing education, but must be good listeners. And they must recognize that decisions are not always clear-cut. "God didn't intend the Bible to be the guide for every tiny little detail," in Rev. Olsen's words. "The Bible doesn't tell us what kind of car to buy—a Buick or a Chevrolet or a foreign car. The Bible is not specific in that way. But the guidelines are there—mercy, compassion, kindness, and so on—and these things need to be built into the ethical decisions that are made." Good ethical decisions from a Christian perspective will be based on what the Scriptures teach, what's taking place in the person's life, good reason, and on the leading of the Spirit of God.

A challenging ministry

In reflecting on the differences between hospital chaplaincy and pastoral ministry, Rev. Olsen mentioned the level of intensity in dealing with crisis situations. "You deal with six to eight deaths each week. You deal almost all the time with people experi-

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Getting to Know

Bill O'Connor
Newberg, Ore.

ROGERS and Hammerstein penned a classic lyric in the musical "The King and I," that should be a lifelong theme for every Christian with regard to their relationship with God. The lyric, of course, speaks of "Getting to Know You," and that's what a walk with God is all about. Knowing God is both the immediate joy and privilege of the new believer, and the lifelong adventure and quest of the maturing saint. We know him the moment we open our lives to him. We go on learning to know him for as long as we live.

Two decades past I ministered with a pastor who referred to salvation and the resultant Christian walk as the process of "giving as much of your self as you know to as much of God as you understand." To my mind that's a revolutionary concept. It offers a simple place to begin, and a lifetime of experience and growth.

Anyone can begin a walk with God at anytime. It isn't necessary for a person to know a lot about himself, and he doesn't have to understand a lot about God. Let's make it personal. All you or I need to do is offer a limited knowledge of ourselves to our limited understanding of God. It is enough to know that we exist and that he exists, and that he wants to have a relationship with each of us.

Once that offer is made, of course, a wonderful growth cycle begins. We immediately know more about ourself than we knew before; and we immediately begin to understand more about God and his love. It's time to make another surrender: to give our new knowledge of self to our new understanding of God. Thus begins a process that can continue for a lifetime. There will never be a time when we know ourselves perfectly, or understand him completely. So we can keep growing in our relationship to God for as long as we live.

That's exactly what God wants his children to do. He invites us repeatedly to enjoy a personal experience with him that is, to put it in the sportscaster's words, "up close and personal."

The ultimate problem faced by this world—and the single most important causal factor behind most of its other problems—is the fact that it does not know God. The Almighty has undertaken to do something about that through the preaching of the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. Paul writes, *"For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe"* (1 Corinthians 1:21). The gospel, heard and received, corrects the basic problem of humankind, which Paul expressed like this: *"when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods"* (Galatians 4:8). Knowledge of God sets us free from slavery to the world and its ways; it sets us free for a lifetime of growth toward maturity.

Intimate knowledge

That God wants us to know him is indisputable. He tells us so in his own words: *"I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart"* (Jeremiah 24:7). The author to the Hebrews reflects that longing: *"No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest"* (Hebrews 8:11). It seems to me that if knowing

We know him the moment we open our lives to him. We go on learning to know him for as long as we live.

him is what God wants for us, then knowing him is what we as Christians had better be about.

I can almost hear some people saying, "But I do know God. I've read my Bible for years, attended Sunday school since I was a little child. Of course I know God!" But God's concern isn't how much we know about him. He's concerned with how well we know him personally. Those same people reply, "I pray daily. I talk to God in the morning and before I go to bed at night, of course I know him" But do they, really? We all talk to many persons every day, some of them day after day through the years. Yet we really don't know those people. We know who they are, but we've never gotten to know them intimately.

That's a key word when it comes to knowing God, that word *intimately*, for that's exactly how God invites us to know him. The word used in Jeremiah, where God says he will give us a heart to know him, is the Hebrew word "yada" which is simply the verb "to know." It was a common word in Bible days, and is used more than a thousand times in the Old Testament. Though a common word, it has a very uncommon meaning. Essentially it means to know by observing and reflecting, and then to know by experiencing. God invites us to take a close look at him—up close and personal, if you will—and to carefully reflect on all that we see. Then he invites us to enter into an intimate relationship with himself, one in which he will reveal his innermost thoughts and feelings to us in an unparalleled giving of himself.

Perhaps the most striking use of the word "yada" is found in the story of Adam and Eve when the Bible says, "And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord (Genesis 4:1, KJV). Lest there be any uncertainty about the roundabout language of the King James, the NIV translates the verse like this: "Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. . ." There is no greater intimacy than that of husband and wife, and it is that level of intimate knowledge of himself that God invites us to plumb.

Surrender daily to the Lord. Consciously listen for his voice, and look for his hand at work.

A journey

I took two years of Spanish in high school. I didn't do well. For me to claim that I know Spanish would be like a child after his first piano lesson claiming to know music. I have a smattering of knowledge, that is all. To really know Spanish I would have to be able to speak it like a native, with a fluency that comes from a lifetime of study. God invites us, even encourages us, to spend that lifetime learning more about him. He wants us to reach the point of being able to speak to him fluently.

I've been married far longer than I was single, yet I do not fully know my wife; I'm still getting to know her, and I learn something new almost every day. She constantly surprises me, and I hope I do the same for her. When we reach the end of life together, neither of us will be able to say that we know the other completely. If there is still more for married couples to learn about each other, even after fifty or sixty years together, how much more must there yet before each of us to learn about God?

The purpose of God's invitation to know him is not to frustrate us with how short a distance we may have come, but to excite us with the possibilities that lie ahead in the distance we have yet to go. Paul caught the vision of knowing God more fully, and he penned, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. . ." (Philippians 3:10). In one of the most remarkable statements of spiritual commitment to be found, Paul says, "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ. . ." (Philippians 3:8).

None of us have arrived at that point of complete, intimate knowledge; we all have a distance yet to travel. The whole point of the Christian life is the journey, and the excitement of it all is found in learning something new, experiencing some new facet of God, on a continuing basis. Get to know him as you would your spouse—spend time with him, talk to him, listen to him, share yourself with him, and let him share himself with you. Consciously practice the development of your relationship with the Lord.

Begin the process of daily surrender to the Lord, and of consciously listening for his voice, looking for his hand at work. Keep your spiritual eyes and ears open to new truth about yourself, and to new understanding of God. Keep giving your new awareness of self to your expanding awareness of the Almighty.

There is no formula for getting to know God. There is but one prerequisite: You must want to know him. If the desire is there, and the willingness to learn and grow, God will reveal himself. Taking in the fullness of that revelation will require the rest of your life. You will never get through getting to know God until the day that you see him face to face; then, says Paul, you will know even as you are known. ❑

Bill O'Connor, is freelance writer, conference speaker, seminar leader, and the founder of Northwest Christian Resource Service of Newberg, Oregon. He has thirty years of ministry experience, having served six churches as Minister of Education, Minister of Youth, and Senior Pastor. He most recently completed fifteen years as Senior Pastor of the Church of the Nazarene in Newberg, Oregon.

What's Cooking in the New Age Kitchen?

Part 5

Arranging the

DURING the past year, we have explored the varied dimensions of the New Age Movement. Previous articles have included a profile of New Age activity, its fundamental beliefs, its influence on our society at large, and ways that Christians can respond with effective evangelism. To conclude this series, we now speculate on what role the New Age Movement will play in the last days of human history.

Conspiracy theories abound

The growth of aberrant religions in Canada and the United States during recent decades has proven beneficial to the Christian booksellers market. Along with the established categories of cults, the occult, and apologetics, New Age topics have earned their portion of the shelf as an enduring product line. Within the New Age selection, various specialties have emerged. Among these are the conspiracy expose such as *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow* by Constance Cumbey (1983), *Peace, Prosperity, and the Coming Holocaust* by Dave Hunt (1983), and *Dark Secrets of the New Age* by Texe Marrs (1987).

While these works are very useful due to an impressive gathering of information, they contain some subtle liabilities. In their enthusiasm for the subject and zeal for biblical truth, the authors sometimes slip into errors of oversimplification, false associations, and unnecessary alarm. Worse yet, some authors have publicly labeled fellow Christians who disagree with their conclusions as New Age collaborators.

Due to these unfortunate dynamics, the 1980s experienced a polarization in the Christian community regarding the conspiratorial nature of the New Age Movement. At one extreme were Christians who were certain that the New Age Movement was directed by calculating villains who were manipulating major events and leaders to implement the New Age dream. At the opposite end of the spectrum were other Christians who denied New Age conspiracy risks altogether. The actual state of New Age expansion is more likely to be somewhere in between. The church needs to remember this while seeking a healthy balance between exposure and response.

The significance of a conspiratorial New Age presence has also steadily declined as the Movement has widely popularized its doctrines and become culturally pronounced. How secret can the conspiracy be when the source materials that many Christian expose writers quote are readily available in retail stores and public libraries? The occult roots of the New Age culture has been the greater challenge to Christianity all along. The church's enduring mission is to engage this false spiritual teaching with meaningful dialogue.

Eschatological views

Along with the evangelical eagerness to expose New Age activity has come a parallel set of forecasts about the New Age role in end times prophecy. This leads the Christians audience into another swamp of speculations. Correlating the end times prophecies in Ezekiel, Daniel, 2 Thessalonians, and Revelation was difficult enough already. Some conspiracy enthusiasts have muddled the issues again by charming their readers with overly confident end times forecasting.

Dave Hunt and Texe Marrs, for example, have popularized the dogma of a pretribulational, premillennial rapture of the saints with little regard for the alternative tribulational and millennial views. More specific interpretations of images in Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation also fail to consider the full scope of alternatives voiced by previous scholarship throughout church history. Unraveling Revelation has produced the preterist, futurist, historicist, and symbolic schools of interpretation and a host of unresolved controversies. The more recent attempts by Hunt and Marrs are not as certain as some readers may assume.

The New World Order

Having cast some doubts on prophetic hype, we should not be too

quick to discard the possible rise of a New World Order. While some expose authors regard this prospect as primarily a New Age scheme, it should also be recognized that there have been other powerful ingredients in advancing its cause. Among these are secular humanism, globalism, and the United Nations (U.N.).

The rise of humanism since the Renaissance has taken many forms through the centuries, including some Christian versions. Optimism for humanity is not inherently bad, but the contemporary secular form of humanism represents a bitter rival to Christian faith. Secular humanism takes its belief in humanity to an extreme level of confidence and evades the existence of God altogether. The humanist vision for an ideal world is encouraged further by globalist expectations. Globalism can be defined as an emphasis on a worldwide approach to human problem-solving as superior to the traditional modes of ethnic or national identity. Campaigns for the globalist agenda have been emerging in four vital areas during the last 25 years. These are ecology, community, economy, and security.

• **Ecology.** As controversy brews among the experts as to how extensive the ecological damage really is, many nations are beginning to recognize that the previous confines of national sovereignty are inadequate to curb the pending crises. International conferences have increased in search of solutions while numerous New Age sympathizers have contributed to their agendas. The "sacredness of Mother Earth," Gaia theory, and similar expressions continue to circulate in the international dialogue.

• **Community.** Thanks to the rapidly growing technology of world communications, even primitive cultures in remote locations can indulge in a global rock concert for famine relief. The growing "global community" is generating "planetary citizens" who are being linked by common expectations and services. The pantheistic notion of unity has frequently been used to justify international consolidation.

• **Economy.** One of the most driving forces behind the growing global community is the economic interdependence that emerges with corporate appetites and profits. What happens on the New York or Tokyo stock exchange can cause international shock waves in a matter of minutes. The related implications for foreign relations are enormous. Various New Age and U.N. organizations are campaigning for related economic restructuring among the nations.

• **Security.** Prior to the collapse of the Soviet bloc, nuclear annihilation was the dominant fear. The end of the Cold War, however, has not removed the danger of nuclear abuse, especially by renegade nations who defy the international consensus. Additional civil wars and guerrilla activity assure a continuing need for effective diplomatic tools. A global solution is a popular model for those who trust in the feasibility of a unifying system of pantheistic values. This is another major reason that globalists find a New World Order intervention attractive.

Works such as Gary Kah's *En Route to Global Occupation* (1991) and Pat Robertson's *The New World Order: It Will Change the Way You Live* (1992) have provided us with ambitious summaries of current trends. Similar to the earlier New Age exposes, however, there is a tendency to make hasty associations and uninformed conclusions with some of the finer details. Reader caution is still advised. The movement to establish the globalist agenda through a New World Order is not as recent or conspiratorial as some have portrayed it. Much of the humanist and U.N. efforts to establish a New World Order have been plodding along in an incremental fashion for years. Consider for example:

• of world law and world order based upon transnational federal government."

• The 1974 U.N. "Declaration on the Establishment of a New Economic Order" calling for a world welfare system that will transfer wealth from First to Third World nations. While this may initially sound like global benevolence, it can also become a tool for the totalitarian control of a centralized elite.

• The 1981 U.N. "Declaration of the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religious Belief" which suggests that the "freedom to manifest one's religion or belief *may be subject only to such limits as are prescribed by law*" (emphasis added). What may first sound like the original American dream can just as easily be utilized for totalitarian oppression with the right legislation. The continuing work of the Planetary Citizens, a U.N. related organization, who collaborated with political and social action groups, New Age organizations, global research institutes, and over 75 international leaders to introduce the "Planetary Initiative for the World We Choose," in 1982, calling for a one-world government.

Is the U.N. a pawn in the hands of New Age conspirators or is the New Age Movement simply aligning itself with a parallel movement for global humanism? Trying to answer the question has helped many a writer's income. In the meantime more pressing matters demand the focus of God's people.

Finding your seat at the table

Following the rabbit trails of conspiracy speculations tends to lead us away from the more vital aspects of Christian disciplines and related spiritual fruit. That is not to say that we should close our eyes to the advance of New Age agenda in our daily lives. We need to resist both paralyzing anxieties about the New Age potential

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A Stranger at Our Door

Miriam Snow Priebe
Mechanic Falls, Maine

THE CHILDREN were fussing and I knew they should be fed. I had so looked forward to our sitting down to the table as a family. My husband had said he would be home at six o'clock and it was now six-thirty. I debated as to whether or not I should start cooking the cube steaks.

We had been in our first parish about six months and it seemed as if every day there was more stress for both of us. My husband was carrying two jobs—one as pastor of a small church and the other as Protestant chaplain in a large tuberculosis hospital. The church had become run down and we had been sent there to help build it up. He needed to work full-time at the church but the money from the chaplaincy helped to augment his small salary. As a result he worked far into the night trying to do justice to both jobs.

I had two young children to care for. In addition, I was involved in the work of the parish—teaching Sunday school myself and training other teachers. I drove out into the country to bring children into town for Sunday school and other church events. There was a constant stream of people to be entertained; folks who had family members in the hospital and nowhere to stay while in town for the visit. Meetings for the women and other special events were held in our home. Since there were no assistant pastors, secretaries, or other paid helpers, a lot of extra duties fell to me. We were both overworked and overtired!

One problem I had was when to serve meals. My husband would leave for the hospital and tell me that he would be home to eat at noon, then perhaps he would not show up until twelve-thirty or even one-thirty. I knew the reason for this. He would start his hospital visitation at one end of a long floor. By twelve he still would have six or seven rooms to visit. In those days the treatment of tuberculosis took months, sometimes years. Time hung heavily for the patients and they were eager for his visits. The patients knew that he visited different floors on different days and he couldn't go home knowing that they had waited all morning for his visit.

I understood all this, but still I had problems too. I had to get one child off to second grade and another to kindergarten. And in those days children came home for lunch. We lived in a great barn of a parsonage on a budget that allowed no extras. I had the phone to answer, the folks to entertain. As I look back I can see how we could have handled things differently but we were both new at our jobs.

On the night I write about I had splurged and bought four small cube steaks for supper—a treat we seldom enjoyed. I planned to have mashed potatoes and canned peas along with bread and fruit for dessert. I had started the potatoes at 5:45 so that they would be ready by six. By quarter of seven I had put the food in the warming oven and was wondering whether to go ahead and feed the children when I finally heard my husband drive in. Quickly I called the kids to the table and started to dole out the food—exactly enough for four—a scoop of potatoes on each plate, a steak and a small side dish of peas.

A full-blown domestic squabble was starting as we raised our voices. Then there was a knock at the kitchen door. . .

I could not conceal my irritation when my husband walked in exhausted from his long day with the sick and dying. I reminded him that he had asked me to have supper ready at six o'clock. He angrily replied that I should know the situation. A full-blown domestic squabble was starting as we raised our voices. The hungry children joined in quarreling and complaining. Then there was a knock at the kitchen door!

My husband answered the knock while I stood poised with a serving spoon in my hand. I wondered unhappily who might have overheard our raised voices.

"Do you have any scissors or knives to be sharpened?" asked a male voice. He told the price which was little enough but one we could not afford.

"No," said my husband—then, "Have you eaten?"

My heart was in my mouth as I looked at the four plates I had just served. Exactly enough for four!

"No, I haven't eaten," replied the man at the door.

"Come join us," said my ever hospitable husband. "We were just sitting down to eat."

In a panic I put an extra plate on the table and, as the man washed up at the kitchen sink, I took a little bit off each plate making a fifth serving. The steaks presented a problem but I cut a little piece off each one and pushed the four pieces together on my plate to

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Building Healthy Relationships

Family Builder

William Batson
Portsmouth, N.H.

THE relationship between Jesus and God the Father is an excellent model for building healthy relationships within the family. At the baptism of Jesus, God takes the time to validate his Son as a person, as a member of the eternal family. As Jesus came up out of the water there was a conspicuous rending of the heavens and the Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove. The Gospel of Mark tells us that a voice from heaven spoke: "You are my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). Basically, God is saying: "I claim you; I love you; I am proud of you." To belong, to be loved, and to be praised are indispensable components for healthy relationships.

The need to belong is basic in each of us. It gives us a sense of identity. We know who we are and no one can take that identity from us. If that need is not met, we wander as unclaimed souls. Often at the root of emotional disturbance is alienation—a sense of being cut adrift from human identity and belonging to no one.

When God says, "You are my son," Jesus' family identity is affirmed. Each of us needs a sense of family. We know who we are by our family names. This may not always be a positive experience. A few years ago at the National Prayer Breakfast held in Washington, D.C., Congressman Tribble told of how wherever his little daughter went, she was constantly being associated with him. People would say, "Oh, you must be Congressman Tribble's little girl." She quietly explained to her parents that she wanted to be herself, not just known as someone else's daughter. Her father told her not to worry about it. But her mother, who was more understanding, said to her, "The next time that happens, just stand right up and say, 'I am Constance Tribble!'" A few days later, a group of people met her and when they heard her name, they said, "Why, Congressman Tribble must be your father!" The little girl looked right at them and said, "Oh no! That's not what my mother says!"

God gives to Jesus the assurance of sonship; "You are my son... I claim you. You belong to me." Jesus is not only the natural Son of God, but he is also the chosen Son of God. You may know the hurt of not being the chosen son or daughter of your parents. You may know the piercing pain of abandonment as an orphan. You may feel the anguish of rejection even while continuing as a member of the family.

When God claims Jesus as his Son by choice as well as by nature, he sets the stage for our adoption into the family of God. By nature, we are not the sons and daughters of God. Sin so separates us from God that we are unclaimed orphans. But, God's affirmation to us is that through faith in Christ Jesus we belong to him: "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). We are to whom we belong.

"I want somebody to love me"

To belong gives us our sense of identity, but we need to be loved for our security. Imagine the strength of security Jesus felt as he heard the words, "You are my Son, whom I love."

Tragedy stalks any relationship where belonging is without love. Dale Galloway tells of a husband and wife interviewing a little boy they wanted to adopt. In glowing terms they described the many things they could give him. To their amazement, the little boy said, "If you have nothing to offer except a good home, clothes, toys, and the other things most kids have, I would just as soon stay here." "What on earth could you want besides those things?" the woman asked. "I just want someone to love me," replied the little boy.

Love is severely tested in human relationships. A son may choose to rebel and forsake his parents. A daughter may make choices that lead to disaster. A parent may withhold love and acceptance from a child. A spouse may attack with words that wound the soul.

In family relationships there is an immense need for an unchanging, unconditional love that endures. A young husband stood by the hospital bed of his wife as they listened to the doctor tell how, in order to remove a tumor, he had to sever a facial nerve that controlled the muscles of her mouth. She asked the doctor, "Will my mouth always be like this?" The doctor said yes. The husband looked at his wife, smiled, and said that he found her mouth "kind of cute." Then he bent over and kissed her, twisting his own lips to meet hers.

Another component of healthy relationships is praise. Praise releases a sense of confidence in our lives. Jesus heard these words: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." The Scriptures reinforce the idea of praise. One example is where the apostle Paul cautions us to "not let any

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Stewardship

Noelle Carle
Attleboro, Mass.

IN A SMALL church from a small denomination, it can be difficult to consider and plan what we can possibly do for the Lord in being good stewards. This difficulty stems from two sources. The first is not recognizing and using the gifts we have. The second is wanting those gifts we don't have.

What does God expect of us? In Matthew 25:14-23, Jesus relates the parable of the talents. In describing both the good servant and his actions, he uses the same word—faithful. Then, talking to the second servant who, by the way, had less to work with, he says the same thing. What we have, or how much, is not the issue. How we use what we have is what matters.

Let's explore the realm of our talents (gifts and resources) to see how we can most faithfully be good stewards.

Discovering our gifts

First, how do we know what our gifts are? Several passages in the Scriptures describe spiritual gifts. It's clear from reading 1 Corinthians 12 that each Christian, each member of the body of Christ, has been given one or more gifts from the Holy Spirit. Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; 28, Romans 12:6-8, and Ephesians 4:11-13.

These are not exhaustive lists. Elsewhere in the Scriptures and through our experience, we know of others. Do you know your spiritual gift or gifts? I have talked with people who have been Christians for years, yet are unsure of their gifts. Ask yourself a few simple questions:

- Do I have a knack for doing certain things?
- Have others pointed out to me my abilities, affirming and encouraging me in them?
- Are there things I enjoy doing, as part of the church, more than others?

If we are willing to use our gifts, I believe the Holy Spirit will confirm to us the best and right way to proceed.

Don't be afraid to explore and try different things. It took me a few years to figure out that while God has given me a gift of teaching, I'm not cut out for teaching children. Several migraines and years went by before I found my niche teaching adults. I feel comfortable, enthusiastic and contented using this gift to help the body.

If we are willing to use our gifts, I believe the Holy Spirit will confirm to us the best and right way to proceed.

Making our gifts work

Let me tell you about how a small church decided to start using its gifts together. They found that when they were faithful in a few things, God put them in charge of a lot. In the face of societal changes, with more young women working full-time and the added pressures from this lifestyle, this church's mission society found themselves floundering. Over the years, attendance had dwindled to five or six women. It seemed to them like no one in the church cared about missions, at home or abroad. So in a radical move, they decided to change the way the church looked at missions. They reactivated the missions committee, tapping into a previously unused resource in the church, its men. At the head of this committee was a man gifted with faith and a burden for the lost.

They began slowly with a food cupboard and a small supply of clothing for the needy in the area. And the church responded generously, giving not only of their resources, but their time. When the floods in the Midwest were wreaking havoc, this committee sensed God's leading to send out supplies from their church. After the news of their plans spread throughout the community, a truck driver stepped forward who was willing to make the trip with his tractor trailer. The church was then faced with the mammoth task of filling the truck. Their small store of supplies took up a mere ten percent of the space. But trusting God and leaping out on faith, they said, "Give us a week, we'll fill it." After advertising locally, they were inundated. Hours and hours of work followed, with everyone, from elderly ladies to young children, lending a willing hand, sorting and packing clothing and food. In one week, that

truck was on its way, packed full. Later that summer, it was followed by two more loads. After the 1994 earthquake in California, a truckload of supplies was delivered there. And in the past year, they've sent clothing, medical supplies and household items to Rumania; and medical supplies, food, and clothing to Mexico.

Recently, this small congregation has acquired a warehouse and is looking at the possibility of disbursing weekly truckloads of food not only to those in the surrounding community, but to the far reaches of the world, with the aid of Samaritan's Purse, headed by Franklin Graham. Everyone is involved and excited about missions. Why? Because they targeted their gifts, then were faithful in using them.

What can I do?

You may be thinking, "What have I got that the Lord can use?" You may feel that your gift is insignificant compared to others. Don't believe it! Let's look at two biblical examples of those who had little to offer, but were used mightily of God.

Read Judges 3:31. Here is the farmer Shamgar, probably out plowing in his fields, prodding his oxen along, when over the brow of a hill came howling hordes of Philistines on a rampage! What could he do? Run for home? Hide under an ox? Shamgar used what he had, an ox goad. With it he killed six hundred Philistines and saved Israel. When God is leading in the use of your gifts, no matter what they are, you will be used mightily.

Read Judges 67:11-14. If you are unfamiliar with the story of Gideon, go back to the beginning of the chapter and read through to the end of chapter 7. God used Gideon, who felt he was weak and abandoned by the Lord. But he was given wise counsel. "Go in the strength you have." Don't look at the gifts others have. Don't envy those who seem to have more prominent gifts or are in the spotlight of the Christian arena. Don't try to do something for which you have neither the gifts nor strength. But if the Lord is sending you, if he's leading you to use your gifts, then do it.

How does this apply to us now? As a group, explore and know your gifts. Find out who has the gift of faith, or leadership and urge them to accept their proper roles. Is there someone who has contacts in the community with hospitals, homeless shelters, food banks? Have you someone who comes up with great plans for meetings or special events? Do you have those with a burden for the lost, the poor, the hungry? Make sure they have a say in your planning. Our gifts are for the good of the body, and our stewardship of these gifts must reflect Christ, who is himself "faithful in all he does" (Psalm 33:4). ❑

Noelle Carle and her husband, Russell, will leave soon for New Zealand to serve as Advent Christian missionaries in that country.

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

June

1 As **Marion Damon, Beryl Joy Hollis**, and **Barbara White** prepare to retire in August, pray that God will give them wisdom and strength as they begin their final three months in India.

2 Pray that God will open the way for **Bill and Celia Jewell**, and **Tim and Ruth Fox** to begin their ministry with Advent Christians in India.

3 Pray that God will guide Advent Christian pastors and congregations in **India** as they communicate the gospel in a land dominated by the Hindu religion.

4 Praise God for his call upon two new Advent Christian missionaries for New Zealand: **Russell and Noelle Carle**.

5 Pray for the **Carle family** as they make final arrangements to begin their work near Auckland, New Zealand.

6 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Warren Prestidge** continues to have as director of Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

7 Pray that God will give **David Vignali** strength as he carries out several important responsibilities for Advent Christian missions in the Philippines.

8 Pray for students and faculty at **Oro Bible College** as they begin a new semester this month.

9 Praise God for the ministry that Asia/Pacific area director **George Teshera** had with Advent Christian national leaders and pastors during his recent time in Malaysia and India.

10 Pray that God will use the work of Advent Christian national missionaries in **Malaysia** to touch lives for Jesus Christ in that officially Islamic nation.

11 Praise God for the ministry of **Amos Gbaa** in establishing an Advent Christian congregation among Liberian refugees in Ghana.

12 Pray that the Lord will provide for Rev. Gbaa's **financial and housing needs** as he proclaims the gospel in Ghana.

13 Pray that God will protect Liberian Advent Christian leader **Ben Cleon Sr.** being help captive by one of the military factions in Liberia.

14 Organized government has ceased to function in

several African nations including **Somalia** and **Liberia**. Pray that God will work in these places not only to bring needed organization and structure, but to bring lives to Jesus Christ.

15 Pray that Advent Christian pastors in **Nigeria** will sense God's leading and direction in their contacts with people who need Jesus Christ.

16 Praise God for teams from several Advent Christian congregations who have effectively served Jesus Christ thorugh **short-term mission projects**.

17 Pray for the young people who will go out as part of the **Project Timothy** short-term teams next month. Project Timothy is sponsored by Oak Grove Advent Christian Church in Miami.

18 Pray for **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** as they continue to proclaim the good news of God's love in inner-city Memphis, Tennessee.

19 Pray for Advent Christian pastors providing specialized ministry in several strategic urban areas in the United States including: **Melchor Jandayan** in San Francisco; **Dennis Ortega** in Los Angeles; **Carlos Quintero** in Pasadena, Calif.; **Lee Welkley** in Jacksonville, Fla.; **Aloysius Okon** in Charlotte, N.C.; and **Anibel Perez** in Dover, Fla.

20 Praise God for the leadership of **Cameron Ainsworth** during the past several years as Assistant for Urban Ministries. Pray that God will guide in the selection of his successor for this important post.

21 Pray for **Steven and Ann Lay** as they have opportunity to speak about missions while home on furlough.

22 Thank God that Advent Christians in the greater **Kobe, Japan**, area were protected from harm during the severe earthquake earlier this year.

23 Pray for those in **Kobe** who have suffered tremendously because of the earthquake and pray for Japanese Christians who continue to provide relief support.

24 Pray that **Margaret Helms** and **Karen Rigney** will continue to have good opportunities to share the gospel in their church-planting ministry in Japan.

25 Praise God for the growth of the Christian faith in the People's Republic of **China** during the past forty years.

26 Pray that God will continue to bless the ministry of Advent Christians in **China** and protect them when they face opposition to the gospel.

27 Praise God for the committed students studying for ministry at **Tecate Bible Institute** in Mexico.

28 Pray for God's direction as Advent Christian missions seeks **Mexican nationals** to employ as church planters.

29 Pray for **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** as they provide leadership for the Advent Christian congregation in El Florido, Mexico.

30 Pray that God will give strength and direction to the staff at the Advent Christian **denominational offices** in Charlotte as they work to strengthen and support local churches.

New Age continued from page 9

and smug complacency in our eternal security. To conclude our New Age series, I suggest three key priorities as the enduring Christian strategy.

• **Protecting the Church.** As the U.S. continues to follow the pattern of Europe in the declining cultural dominance of Christianity, we can expect to see the growing influence of the cults, the occult, and competing world religions in our communities. As the secular and New Age influences prevail, the satanic realm will continue to exploit the weaknesses of the church with related infiltration. Christians must be on guard to maintain orthodox doctrine, detect and confront false teaching and practices, and enrich the relationships that make up the body of Christ.

• **Contending for the Gospel.** The consequences of religious belief are eternal. Let us not grow weary of the inevitable conflict that comes with competing belief systems. God desires that all souls enter his kingdom. But this will not come without a struggle. Let us not grow idle in the comfort zones of our church families. If you feel unprepared to defend the Christian faith, then it is time to take steps to improve your communication skills.

• **Developing Spiritual Maturity.** While the pretribulation rapture is a popular belief among evangelicals, objectively speaking, there remains a possibility that the rapture will be posttribulational. How ready are you to go through the persecution of the future world dictator (the man of sin foretold in 2 Thessalonians 2) and a holocaust-type experience? The comforts of the American lifestyle have insulated us from possible life-threatening persecution for our faith. The world will continue to need real people of God as well as real answers from God. Our success in the last days will come more from the depths of our relationships than the depths of our survival bunkers. Make your relationship with him as vibrant as you can as you serve others in need. ". . .stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58). ❑

Andy Bjorklund is a veteran observer of pseudo-Christian and non-Christians religious movements including the New Age Movement. He and his wife Pauline have recently moved to Everett, Washington.

Hope for Those continued from page 5

encing major losses," according to Rev. Olsen. "And you deal with a lot of grief—a lot more than you would in the average pastorate."

He also mentioned the organizational role of the hospital chaplain. "In the pastorate, you're probably a big frog in a small pond," meaning that pastors play a large role in their congregations. "But in the hospital situation," in Rev. Olsen's words, "you're a small frog in a big pond." So you're dealing with issues from a totally different administrative viewpoint than in the local church. And while Rev. Olsen is directly accountable to a hospital vice-president, "My ultimate accountability is to God. No one makes me do something that's not biblical or that my conscience would not allow me to do." And he has found the hospital very open to that perspective.

Rev. Olsen also pointed out that pastoral work tends to be more flexible both in terms of geography and function. "Pastors work in a broad area while hospital chaplains have their work confined to a building or group of buildings," according to Rev. Olsen. "Chaplaincy is a narrow specialty and you don't have a great deal of flexibility. Here you have to work with what's going on and do something you know has been set before you."

But despite the different demands of ministry as a hospital chaplain, Rev. Olsen has found great opportunity to effectively serve Jesus Christ in this setting. "I've had people come back up to a year after they have been hospitalized just to let me know how much it meant to them that I was with them through their struggles." And Rev. Olsen has had patients call "who knew they were dying and knew they needed to get their life right with the Lord." He especially remembers those opportunities to assist people in finding the Lord as their Savior.

He's also experienced the satisfaction of seeing the pastoral care department become a significant part of the hospital operation. "People instantly think of the chaplain when there is a major problem in the hospital," according to Rev. Olsen. "That's very gratifying. It's taken us a few years to do that, because I was the first full-time chaplain here, there was no pastoral care department prior."

Ken Olsen has established a beachhead for compassionate Christian ministry in a large Jacksonville, Florida, hospital. Through him and the volunteers he trains, God is touching broken lives with hope. ❑

Editorial continued from page 3

gave their lives to stop tyranny. But as an American Christian, I'm grateful for a German Christian who dared to be faithful to Jesus Christ. He was willing to follow Jesus to the point of death. Could it be that we American Christians will sometime face that same choice? ❑

Stranger continued from page 10

look like a fifth steak. I divided the peas and put more bread on the table.

The stranger was about fifty years old, dressed in shabbily patched overalls. We sat down, joined hands, as was our custom, and said grace in unison.

We had a lovely meal. Our gentle guest complimented me on the delicious meal—lukewarm by then. He talked pleasantly to the kids and showed appreciation for being allowed to share our supper. The children were charmed and we all relaxed. He brought out the best in all of us.

I was sure he must have heard the fussing when he stood at our door but he made me feel that didn't matter. His bright blue eyes looked kindly at each of us. Afterwards he left with a friendly handshake and repeated thanks as my husband slipped him fifty cents toward his next meal (we had no more to give).

After he was gone a kind of peace settled down over the house. The children went happily off to bed and my husband and I asked each other's forgiveness. Who was our stranger? We never saw or heard from him again. As far as we are concerned he was an angel we had "entertained unaware." God sent him—whoever he was! ❑

Relationships continued from page 11

unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" (Ephesians 4:29).

We are often quick to criticize, but slow to praise. This is particularly true with those closest to us. Parents tend to transfer their unattained dreams to their children as unrealistic aspirations. To compound the error, we fail to praise them for their own achievements or we criticize them for not measuring up to our expectations.

When God says to his Son, "I am proud of you," he commends his character, honors his achievements, and encourages him for the future. Family members grow faster in the direction of our praise than in the path of our criticism.

Three indispensable components of a healthy relationship are: a sense of identity, a sense of security, and a sense of confidence. Work on applying these components in relationships with your family and friends. Affirm them by saying and showing that you claim them, love them, and are proud of them. ❑

William Batson lives in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, with his wife and two daughters. He is the coordinator of Family Builders Ministries for the Evangelistic Association of New England and pastor of Family Life Ministries at the Kennebunk, Maine, Advent Christian Church.

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June 1995

Marriage



Three articles explore the foundations for building strong Christian marriages.

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Marriage is seen by some as archaic and outdated. Not according to what the Bible teaches.

—photo by Jim Whitmer

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Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria



THE ULTIMATE JUDGE

WE LIVE IN a violent, terror-filled world. For too long, Americans have ignored that reality. As long as violence seemed confined to places like the Middle East, Liberia, Rwanda, and Bosnia, we could ignore it and pretend that somehow our society was immune from the hatred that grips those far-away places.

With Oklahoma City, we no longer have that luxury. As we soon discovered, the face of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building was ripped off by American terrorists. For this small band of cowards, innocent human suffering becomes a political statement. And like their compatriots in Iran, Serbia, and Northern Ireland; for these American terrorists the value of human life becomes far less important than being right or "politically correct."

Our attempts at retribution wind up causing far more destruction and harm than good.

No surprise

American Christians shouldn't be surprised that some of our fellow citizens would stoop to terrorist means. We who take the Scriptures seriously know what they teach regarding human nature. In the words of John Stott, "the very nature we have inherited is tainted and twisted with self-centeredness." Jesus taught that the roots of evil rest in our hearts (see Mark 7:21-23). Both individually and corporately, we've refused to acknowledge God as our Creator and Lord.

Our desire to live independently of our Creator's will stands at the heart of tragedies like Oklahoma City. We're easily aware of how sin is reflected in individual behavior—drunkenness, immorality, racism, greed, interpersonal conflict, gossip, and so on. But terrorist acts like what we saw in Oklahoma City demonstrate how sin can be manifested corporately. I can't read the twisted minds of those terrorists, but I'll bet that they saw their action as some form of retribution for what they perceived as unjust action on the part of the United States government.

But what injustice, perceived or real, could call for murdering and injuring hundreds of people? That's the fundamental problem that occurs when we take matters into our own hands. Our own sinfulness, our own self-centeredness, mars our ability to judge properly. And our attempts at retribution wind up causing far more destruction and harm than good.

What God wants

The Bible continually reminds us that God is the ultimate judge. Yes, we should support a proper sense of social justice through our court system. But even our courts, as best as they try, will not always be able to provide proper justice. What human penalty or sentence can adequately deal with the death, suffering, and tragedy experienced by so many in Oklahoma City on that April morning? Even after these terrorists are caught, tried, and punished, will any of us feel like justice has been done?

If you're like me, it's hard to watch the evening news without a growing sense of alarm over trends within our society. How should we respond? A few Christians are being sucked in by the conspiracy theories of various survivalist and paramilitary groups. The call to fight government intrusion and take matters into our own hands is an alluring one. But that's not what Scripture teaches us to do. We're to leave ultimate judgment in God's hands and place our lives in his providential care. And we're to practice the Christian faith as individuals and as churches. Our society needs to grapple with the reality of human sinfulness, with the value that God places on human

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Marriage

As It Was Meant To Be

William Batson
Portsmouth, N.H.

A SIGN in a jewelry store window some years ago captured the essence of what has happened on the marriage scene: "We rent wedding rings." Refrigerators and stoves have a life expectancy longer than many marriages. But God's design and desire is that our marriages last for a lifetime.

In the animal kingdom there are some interesting examples of how different species relate to their mates. The black widow spider devours her companion after their ritual mating. The sea lion males build their harems and have been known to injure or kill their families to defend their turf. The female elephant dominates the male and kicks him out of the herd. Then, there are snakes who mate in a casual rendezvous, only to slither off into the dark with no thought of long-term commitment.

Yet, God established a different order for the pinnacle of his creation. He has created us male and female to walk together, side by side, for a lifetime. It is his design that in marriage the love of a man and woman should be fulfilled in the wholeness of their life together, in mutual companionship, helpfulness, and care. Because of our need to not be alone, God said, "a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). This is the only relationship in which God sees two people as one person. He said "and they will become one flesh." This unity is a lifelong process, not an instant fact, requiring wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. Unity, not uniformity, is what God had in mind with marriage. Unity, one flesh, conveys the idea of mutual acceptance, giving, listening, forgiving, belonging, and direction. It is two individuals willingly blending into each other's lives, desiring to share with and thereby complete the other.

Two become one

When God's pattern for a marriage is followed something quite remarkable results: two become one. This is more than togetherness. Two individuals merge into one—one in mind, heart, body, and spirit. This is why divorce has such a devastating effect. It is not that two people are left, but fractions of one.

Becoming one flesh involves intimate physical union in sexual intercourse—without shame between marriage partners. "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (Genesis 2:25). The sexual relationship becomes a physical, visible picture of the stimulation, encouragement, responsiveness, and shared joy that needs to be expressed continually in every area of our life together. Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed in one another's presence. This has to do with far more than just their physical relationship. It is a picture of all of their life together. They were free to be seen in one another's presence as real people, with strengths and weaknesses. All of their person and life were exposed—vulnerable, open, wholly known, completely accepted and affirmed. In God's design and provision they shared a depth of intimacy that drew them close to one another and fulfilled their lives.

For this kind of intimacy to exist, marriage demands an inseparable joining of husband and wife throughout their lifetime. There is no use leaving unless you are ready to spend a

lifetime "cleaving," as the King James Version of the Bible states it. In the Hebrew language, cleaving and united come from a word which means to cling to or adhere to, to be joined together. There is a permanence to the relationship. Jesus recognized this in his earthly ministry. When answering a question about marriage and divorce, he decreed that "what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matthew 19:6).

Marriage begins with a leaving, a leaving of all other relationships. It has been said that the wedding ring is designed to cut off your circulation. The bonds to others must be altered in character so that the man's full commitment is now to his wife. And the wife's full commitment is now to her husband. The effect of this principle is that other things and relationships are given a lesser priority—business, career, church work, parents, friends. All must be placed in proper perspective. Whatever is important to you in this life (aside from your relationship with God) should be less important than your marriage.

In marriage, a husband and wife are to have a wholehearted commitment to one another. Both spouses are to do everything possible and to be all they should be in order to form ties with each other that will make them inseparable. Dr. Ed Wheat says, "Anything that puts distance between you, mentally or physically, should be avoided because it breaks the divine pattern for marriage." When a man and a woman are joined together in marital commitment, they have made a positive decision to stay together, love and affirm each other, grow as persons, and make their marriage an expression of their desire for each other's happiness.

Protecting the marital bond

What can a couple do to protect the permanence of their marriage? Loving one another with a dynamic love is a first step. The apostle Paul told husbands to "love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). The Bible instructs older women in the church to "train the younger women to love their husbands" (Titus 2:4). Love has been described as a feeling you feel when you get a feeling you never felt before. But it is more than a feeling. Love is a choice of the will and is not dependent upon feelings. Love is a verb, not a noun. It is love of action, not emotion. We do not do what we do because we feel the way we feel. We feel the way we feel because we do what we do. The apostle John said, "And when we love each other God lives in us and his love within us grows ever stronger" (1 John 4:12). As spouses give love to each other, God gives more love to them. The supply of God's love is increased as we activate love by our actions.

Marriage is a committed love. Jim and Sally Conway (*Traits of a Lasting Marriage*) define this love as a desire to understand the other and a willingness to give energy from one's life for the other's highest fulfillment. This love of commitment embodies a promise to keep on loving when our loving is not satisfying our personal desires. Lewis Smedes says, "Committed love is a power to surrender our right to get what we desire so that the person we love can get what he or she needs." A lasting love involves a commitment that reaches out beyond one's own wants into the other person's needs. It keeps on reaching.

Whatever is important to you in this life (aside from your relationship with God) should be less important than your marriage.

To comfort one another is another means of protecting the marital bond. Comforting includes the idea of strengthening and encouraging. Those qualities are evidenced in caring about a person in a gentle, supportive way. Peter told husbands to live with their wives in an understanding and considerate manner (1 Peter 3:7). What kind of picture is God giving us by creating Eve from Adam's rib (Genesis 2:21-23)? It has often been said that God did not take Eve from Adam's head so that she would rule over him, or from his feet so that she would be his slave. Dr. Bill Mills notes that our ribs protect our most vital organs. Our ribs protect our heart. This would be Eve's ministry in the life of her husband—she would give protection to his heart, a healing refuge of comfort as designed by God. Dr. Mills says, "She will be a sanctuary for the heart of her husband."

Each spouse seeks to build a stronger marriage as he or she focuses on becoming the host, not the guest in the relationship. When you are a guest, everything is done for you. You feel no sense of responsibility or initiative. It is nice to be a guest, to be enriched, entertained, pampered; just to relax, indulge, and enjoy.

However, if each marriage partner is hoping to be a guest, expecting the other to exercise initiative for his or her benefit, there is trouble. Both will be disappointed. The marriage comes to a grinding halt and an affair becomes attractive. Jesus' advice to us is this: "Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many." No marriage can accommodate two guests—not even one guest. A strong, satisfying marriage must have two hosts—each personally committed to the active/initia-

tive role of the mature adult, not the passive/receptive role of the spoiled child.

Honoring each other

A marriage that lasts is one where each partner honors the other. We each have a basic need for admiration, which is met as we honor one another. To honor another means to have high regard for or to give great respect. The Scriptures charge us to show respect in marriage. "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect. . ." (1 Peter 3:7). In Ephesians 5:33 the wife "must respect her husband."

Love. . . is more than a feeling. Love is a choice of the will and is not dependent upon feelings. Love is a verb, not a noun.

A husband honors his wife by cherishing her as his most valued asset and recognizing her worthy accomplishments. The wife esteems her husband as she displays an understanding of his needs and responsibilities, focusing on his strengths rather than his weaknesses. Each spouse is honored when they take sufficient time with each other to discuss problems, joys, dreams, goals, decisions, and family matters. Couples who constantly dash past each other, rushing off to their life outside the home, are not building a lasting marriage. They are heading toward disaster.

God designed marriage for keeps. It involves an unswerving loyalty and a belonging to each other in a permanent union, no matter what. To have a marriage that lasts a lifetime requires work. It doesn't just happen. Norman Wright says, "You must constantly fight to keep your commitment to marriage primary in your lives and resist the pressure to share that commitment with other facets of life. Your level of commitment is the most vital factor in determining the success or failure of your relationship."

True marital commitment has a dimension of endurance which is the ability to stick with the relationship through the changing seasons of life—"for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish 'till death do us part." Endurance is like the material in some men's socks. The socks are made of eighty percent high bulk Orlon and twenty percent nylon. The nylon is a webbing which holds the high bulk Orlon in place. Have you ever noticed the heels and toes where the Orlon has worn away? There isn't an actual hole; the material is just thin. The nylon is still there.

In a sense, endurance in a marriage is like the nylon webbing in a sock. It doesn't wear out. Everything else around it may go, but it's still there, doing its job of holding the marriage together.

A Christian marriage is a commitment involving three individuals—husband, wife, and Jesus Christ. It is a pledge of mutual fidelity and mutual submission. It is an opportunity for each one to grow and develop his or her individual abilities and giftedness. This is God's design for marriage—marriage as it was meant to be. ❑

William Batson is associate pastor at Kennebunk, Maine, Advent Christian Church and director of Family Builders, a ministry of the Evangelistic Association of New England.

Forgiveness

Miriam Snow Priebe
Mechanic Falls, Maine

ONE OF THE joys our family experienced while living in Ven ezuela was visiting the Andes Mountains. We would breathe the fresh cool air, hike up the slopes, and gaze at the ever-changing cloud patterns above and the green valleys below. However, there was one small problem-the proverbial fly in the ointment (actually a *gnat* rather than a fly)! Charles would just brush off these little insects and seemed unaffected by their stings. But I suffered swelling and itching for a week or more.

Friends recommended various sprays and lotions and I finally found one that would indeed keep those gnats away. The trick was to never leave a spot uncovered, for the insects had an uncanny way of seeking out any spot on my skin that was untreated! I remember one occasion particularly because it involved my wedding ring.

Like a great many other women of my generation, I had never removed my wedding ring since the day we were married over thirty years before. Unluckily, when I had armed myself against those little pests I had missed spraying the very tip of my ring finger. Sure enough, a gnat found the spot! That night my finger started to swell. It had never occurred to me to remove my ring, and when I finally realized that the ring had to come off, I couldn't remove it.

In the end, to save my finger, Charles got a file and filed off my wedding ring. In a day or two my finger had returned to its normal size. Charles bought me another wedding

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New Zealand

A Different Kind of Mission Field

Harold Patterson

WHY IS THE Advent Christian Church opening New Zealand as a mission field? When many people hear the term "mission field" they immediately think of semiliterate people living in thatched houses in a warm climate. While a century ago that description might well have been valid, it's not really a valid image of all potential mission fields today. There are great needy mission fields in Europe, Australia, even New Zealand, places where Western culture, affluence, and high literacy are common. Yet most people in those societies are lost, a terrible lostness, if we understand "lostness" from a biblical perspective.

New Zealand is different as a mission field because its culture is Western and English oriented. Its people are gifted, literate, and outgoing. It's a country considered affluent by most of the world, with the bulk of its citizens enjoying comfortable living and many of the technological gadgets we're accustomed to. New Zealand is a beautiful country with a temperate climate, growing cities, and wonderful rolling hills where great numbers of sheep and deer are raised for export. It's a country where Bibles and Christian literature are readily available.

But New Zealand is a mission field and Advent Christians are there first of all for the greatest and most important reason of all: To reach lost men and women for Christ. If I were to give you a pop quiz and ask, percentage wise, which country would have the greater percentage of Christians, Korea or New Zealand, how would you respond? The correct answer would be Korea, by almost twice the percentage of New Zealand. Approximately 15% of New Zealanders would profess to be Christians in any form, and only a portion of those would be evangelical. With all its education and affluence, New Zealand has become a secular country without any belief in the God of the Bible.

We're also going to New Zealand because we have enjoyed fellowship with a group of believers who share a common understanding with Advent Christians about what the Bible teaches concerning the nature of man and the destiny of the wicked. For many years, there was a conference of like-minded churches in Newfoundland. That conference has disbanded and some of them have joined other groups. Yet there are those who believe that life only in Christ is a message that needs to be stressed as an important distinctive. We are going to assist those like-minded brethren, and to establish an Advent Christian Conference in New Zealand.

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Our brethren in New Zealand have furnished us missionaries for India, Japan, and now the Philippines with Warren and Jackie Prestidge. They have provided work-teams in the Philippines and India. They have provided financial support for our mission cause for many decades.

Perhaps the greatest resource of all are their mission prayer groups which pray regularly for the cause of Advent Christian Missions. We don't want to lose that resource. We want instead to nurture it and maintain fellowship with those who support us so faithfully. We're going to New Zealand because we believe that there will be those who will want to continue to serve either in our mission, or possibly as pastors or associate pastors in the United States. This is another resource that we consider valuable and important to us.

We are going to New Zealand because we see the potential for a strong, self-supporting Advent Christian Conference that will continue to send workers and mission support throughout Asia and the world. As Advent Christian work grows in the world, the need for the strong prayer and financial support increases. We need to work in places where we can be sure of self-supporting and mission-supporting conferences. We need their help to go into those areas where pastors and churches cannot support themselves. New Zealand is but one among several nations that we hope

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The Temptation to Have an Affair

Tom L. Eisenman

THERE IS NO story more telling of the tragic consequences of an adulterous affair than the biblical story of David and Bathsheba.

King David was the greatest king of biblical history, a faithful man whose heart belonged to God. One evening, from the roof of his palace, he watched a beautiful woman bathe. He inquired about her and found out she was Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of David's soldiers who was away on battle duty. David sent for Bathsheba and slept with her. She became pregnant.

David decided to try to cover up the sin. He called Uriah home from the field, expecting that the soldier would sleep with his wife while on furlough. The noble Uriah would not go home and sleep in pleasure while his fellow soldiers were sleeping in tents and engaged in battle. Uriah slept on the palace steps two evenings in a row. Frustrated, David sent him back to the front carrying sealed orders to place Uriah at the head of the battle where the fighting was fiercest. Uriah was killed in battle. Out of fear that his sin would become known, King David had murdered a loyal soldier who would have gladly and freely given his life for the king he loved (2 Sam 11).

The statistics on the frequency of affairs today are disheartening. After reviewing the recent literature, Reiss and Thompson indicate that forty to fifty percent of all married men have extramarital affairs. Nearly seventy percent of all married men under forty expect to have an extramarital relationship. Given the increasingly permissive views toward sex today, researchers Gilbert Nass and Roger Libby have predicted that between one-half and two-thirds of all husbands will have an affair before they reach age forty.

Perhaps even more disturbing (although not surprising) for us as Christians is the result of a poll conducted recently by the research department of *Christianity Today*. They asked pastors in the U.S., "Have you ever had sexual intercourse with someone other than your spouse since you've been in local church ministry?" Of the respondents, twelve percent answered yes. Of the eighty-eight percent who answered no, many chose to write along with the answer that their sexual purity had not come easily. Pastors were also asked, "Have you ever had other forms of sexual contact with someone other than your spouse, i.e. passionate kissing, fondling/mutual masturbation, since you've been in local church ministry?" Eighteen percent answered yes.

Christianity Today further tested its results by polling a larger Christian population with the same questions. From a random sample of a thousand subscribers to the magazine, forty-five percent marked that they had acted inappropriately, and twenty-three percent had experienced extramarital intercourse. These responses nearly doubled the percentages in the poll for professional ministers. If the statistics are this high among readers of *Christianity Today*, then how much higher must they be in the general Christian population? They may approximate the population at large.

Few extramarital affairs end in murder, although some do. The story of David and Bathsheba is certainly unusual in this sense. *But all extramarital affairs produce extraordinary pain for those who are involved in the affair and those who are innocent but relationally connected.*

Adultery has long-term consequences

The sin of adultery is condemned throughout Scripture. Leviticus 18:20 reads, "Do not have intercourse with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her." The sin was regarded as so harmful that its punishment was death (Lev. 20:10). The New Testament also warns against adultery. Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral" (see also 1 Cor 6:9; Jas 4:4).

What is adultery? It is explicitly a voluntary sexual encounter of a married person with anyone other than his lawfully wedded spouse. Sometimes adultery occurs as an extramarital encounter, or one-night stand. This kind of encounter lacks the ongoing attraction and intense involvement that characterize the extramarital affair that has progressed in relationship over time. The one-night stand, however, still has enormous potential for harm in a relationship. For one thing, it can grow into a full-fledged affair. But even if a relationship does not develop, the sin will deeply affect the persons who have had the encounter.

All sexual sin *is powerful and memorable.* A Christian cannot indulge in sexual sin lightly. We cannot play with sex like we play tennis. Anyone who thinks he can be a sexual dilettante is in for a painful surprise. Life changes when adultery occurs. There is always the cover-up. There are lies, pretenses, suspicion, and if the truth surfaces, trust in the marriage relationship is often irreparably damaged. There will be relational consequences. King David's sin was apparently a one-night encounter. That one-night stand led to murder.

The long-term affair which includes cohabitation is even more devastating to everyone involved. The man and woman in this situation develop an intense emotional preoccupation and share repeated acts of sexual intercourse. The affair becomes an obsession. Everything from career success to the health of family life is deeply threatened by this adulterous relationship. For the Christian, the affair destroys credibility and witness. Think for a moment of the nationally known Christian leaders who have suffered as a result of this kind of indiscretion. The emotional and psychological trauma of the affair in the life of the Christian is devastating. David's deeply real description of the aftermath of sin in the believer's life is worth reading in this context:

O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger
or discipline me in your wrath.
For your arrows have pierced me,
and your hand has come down upon me.
Because of your wrath there is no health in
my body;
my bones have no soundness because of
my sin.
My guilt has overwhelmed me
like a burden too heavy to bear.
My wounds fester and are loathsome

All sexual sin is powerful and memorable. Life changes when adultery occurs.

because of my sinful folly.
I am bowed down and brought very low;
all day long I go about mourning.
My back is filled with searing pain;
there is not health in my body.
I am feeble and utterly crushed;
I groan in anguish of the heart.
(Ps. 38:1-8)

Knowing the pain that will inevitably result from living in sin should make us want to do everything we can to keep from being caught in the ugly snare of adultery.

How affairs happen

Extramarital affairs most often occur without conscious premeditation. If we tried people today for having affairs, few would be found guilty of adultery in the first degree. Men and women usually slip into a relationship with someone and soon find that they are deeply involved and it is difficult to disentangle themselves.

Two factors combine to create a situation ripe for the affair. There has to be an emotional readiness and a timely opportunity. We often hear in counseling, "I was an affair waiting to happen."

Modern movies, books, TV soaps and sitcoms all promote the notion that extramarital sex is a diversion that can add interest and entertainment to our present dull existence. If any risk or harm is hinted at in the media, it is usually tenuously presented in contrast to the strong promise of increased pleasure, excitement, warmth and caring for the person courageous enough to risk the new relationship. This media blitz, coupled with the contemporary demise of American morality, creates an environment ripe for sexual promiscuity. This immoral stance of our society toward promiscuity is a major influence which emotionally and psychologically prepares men and women to be open to the possibility of an extramarital affair.

The condition of a marriage also contributes to a person's readiness for an affair. If there is tension in the marriage relationship, it is easy to see an outside person as the answer to all life's problems. Couples with unre-

solved relational difficulties, money problems, or unhealthy or unrewarding sexual lives within the marriage can become candidates for an outside relationship. Whenever the home begins to represent tension in the minds of married couples and outside friendships with opposite sex promise relationship without the hassle, there is potential danger.

Any unresolved marital tension can contribute to a person's readiness for an extramarital affair. This is why it is so important for husbands and wives to work hard at their marriages and to get help with any problems that persist in their relationship.

There are also many personal factors that contribute to a readiness to have an affair. The influence of our upbringing can be an important factor. Poor parental models and lack of love in our parent's marriage can create a psychological disposition toward brokenness in our marriage. Or a lenient upbringing can set up patterns of self-indulgence. An overly strict upbringing can promote feelings of being trapped in a marriage, or struggles with authority in a relationship. Lack of maturity of individuals, or emotional instability, or poor self-image or depression, or any number of other emotional, physical or psychological problems can create a readiness for an affair, either in the person with the problem or in the person's mate.

The quality of our relationships with Christ is also of paramount importance. *Are we strong in Christ, or have we let our faith go and let the world inch its way into our lives?* Again, it is extremely important to get help with any personal difficulties that might contribute to problems in our marriages. We should feel no shame for seeking professional help to keep our marriages strong. The only really shameful thing is to stand by and do nothing, letting our marriage fall apart before it even has a chance to grow into the beautiful relationship it was meant to be.

Is the cup of your marriage half-empty? Or half-full? The thing to do is to *recognize the time spent in your present relationship as an investment to be nurtured.* Your marriage is like a good retirement plan. As long as you keep the deposits flowing, the account grows. The marriage develops like compound interest over time. Small investments of love and nurture reap great dividends in relational happiness. No one in their right mind would squander a solid investment account that has been growing through the years to take up a shaky, speculative venture. It does not make good sense. If the grass is greener on the other side of the fence, you should try watering your own.

There is no easy road to authentic relationship. It takes hard work. If you feel the pleasure has gone out of your marriage, or the romance, or that the marriage is not meeting your basic need for encouragement and love, then you have work to do. I'm sorry, but there is no other way. The only action that makes sense is to dig in and recommit yourself to your present marriage. Why has the pleasure left? Do you need to have more time away as a couple? Are you taking advantage of every opportunity to have fun together and rekindle some of the earlier flame? What is it in the relationship that is not meeting your needs? Why not talk with your wife about this? It is difficult for you as a man to admit that you have needs, especially emotional needs. But my experience tells me that wives are usually good at listening if their husbands will only begin talking. Honest dialogue will build great strength into your marriage. Again, you may need help from a skilled third person to get this kind of real sharing started.

A good marriage is worth any amount of work you may need to invest in it. No other endeavor pays such rich dividends over time. Please, don't be duped. Resist the lie that another woman might be the answer to all your problems. There is no benefit in starting over from scratch. You will only live from brokenness to brokenness without success. Learn how to fill your half-full cup to the brim.

The Good Fight

There are numerous things we can do to fight the temptation to stray from our marriages and families.

1. Build the marriage relationship. Having a good marriage will reduce the readiness of the marriage partners for an affair.

Communication is the key here. Staying in touch with each other's feelings, pressures, and tensions will keep you focused on where your relationship needs work. Caring enough to meet these mutual needs in your marriage will help make your relationship a meaningful one in which to be involved. This kind of communication requires time. Make time for each other.

Judie and I went on a weekend together in Colorado shortly after

Resist the lie that another woman might be the answer to all your problems. There is no benefit in starting over from scratch. If the grass is greener on the other side of the fence, you should try watering your own.

moving to Boulder. We had four small children at the time. It seemed almost more work than it was worth arranging care for the kids all weekend. Once on the road we realized that we had not been away from the kids alone together since Jana was a baby. It had been six years.

The weekend did not turn out to be one of our best experiences, but in a way it was one of the most helpful to our relationship. Often during the three days and two nights, we sat and stared at each other with nothing to say. We had let our relationship get away from us. The kids had been the center of everything for too long. It was good to recognize the problem early. What if we had continued our pattern of lack of communication until the kids were gone? There would be nothing left of our marriage. Judie and I talked about it all weekend. We dedicated ourselves to finding regular time together without the kids so that we could continue to grow closer in our relationship over the years.

Do fun and interesting things together as a couple. Talk regularly with each other about the important things in your life. Take advantage of opportunities to learn and grow together as a couple whenever possible. Take classes together on marriage topics. Go to marriage encounters. Read and study books together on marriage and family topics. Be intentional in building your marriage in this way. If you have to be on separate paths for a while, talk constantly about your individual experiences. Let your spouse share in your work life and be sure you share in hers. Another important way to develop intimacy is to practice spiritual disciplines as a couple. Study the Bible together, even if you just read one verse a day, discuss it briefly and spend a few minutes in prayer. God will bless your earnest attempts to draw near to him and to have a Christ-centered marriage.

Fill your mind with thoughts about your wife and kids. Keep reminders of your family with you, pictures of your wife and kids at the office, in your wallet. When I am traveling, the first thing I do in a strange motel room is take the family pictures out and put them on the dresser or mirror where I can see them and think about them and pray for them while I'm gone. Keep regular contact with your family by phone if you have to travel.

Talk over with your wife what you would consider appropriate relating with the opposite sex. Decide together what is acceptable for the two of you. Is it proper for you to have lunch with a female associate? Once? Twice? How many times? How often? Work on reasonable limits toward relating to others with which both of you feel comfortable. This will guard your marriage. If an unusual circumstance occurs that would be outside of your agreed-upon behavior, share it. Don't hide it, or dismiss it as unimportant. There will be times when exceptions from your rules are necessary.

Work together on the romance factors in your marriage. Get creative in gift giving and sharing notes of love and appreciation. It's not that these things become less meaningful after we have been married for a while, it is that we stop thinking creatively and arranging the little surprises that were common for us when we were dating. Surprise parties and expressions of caring that cost something for you to plan are ways to say, "I love you" and keep the romance in your lives.

2. The Affair Process. Do you find yourself fantasizing about someone in your work circle? Or a neighbor? Or a friend's wife? Don't be caught off guard. Don't let rationalization and denial build your readiness for relationship with a woman outside your marriage. Keeping a clear head about the affair process will help you to avoid the common traps. For instance, if you recognize that you are lingering in public, start avoiding contact. This will sometimes be a real battle. But I guarantee you it is easier to stop the behavior at level five than at level eleven. Be tough with yourself. Be accountable to your wife and to friends for your behavior. Accept insights and the awareness of friends and your spouse when they suggest that you may be playing with fire in a relationship.

The most important idea to remember is that all sin starts in the mind. If we control it there, it cannot grow. Turn sexual fantasies toward your marriage. Control your thoughts. Even pray for good dreams. God will help you manage this sexual dimension of your life.

3. Walk with God. Foundational to gaining strength to resist temptation is a life lived in God. I can remember times in my life when I felt spiritually flat and emotionally exhausted. I know how vulnerable I was. I thank God daily for the many times he has protected me when I have not had the good sense to take care of myself.

Guard against complacency

Be regular in fellowship with Christians. Be regular in worship. Be regular in your devotional life. I have found my men's Bible study to be an essential part of the spiritual foundation for my life. Men need to have a place where they can discuss openly and honestly with other men the tensions and problems they encounter in life. If you are not in a study like this, seek one. Make certain it has the element of personal sharing in it. Also, find your place of ministry through your local church. Where can you

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THREE LESSONS ABOUT MARRIAGE WE LEARNED FROM OUR PARENTS.

What God Has Joined Together

Scott Carpenter
Charlotte, N.C.

SATURDAY, June 26, 1993. The General Conference triennial session was nearing an end. The tie on my neck was tight, and thoughts of the honeymoon danced around my head. There was a certain peace about this day, perhaps of the knowledge that this marriage was right. My brothers led the parade of nervous bridesmaids as they played "Trumpet Voluntary." And yes, I did cry as I pronounced my vows of love, but then emotion should be great on this day.

The ceremony was faster than I could ever imagine. Before I knew it, my grandfather was introducing us to the world as "Mr. and Mrs. Scott Carpenter." It sounded as funny as the first time I introduced Joy as, "And this is my wife, Joy." I still get a funny feeling when I recall that week. But something echoed in my mind as I considered the wedding and the commitment I had made, "What God has joined, let no man separate" (see Matt. 19:6; Mk. 10:9).

It's been two years now, and each day I learn to love Joy more and more. Through Jesus' grace and love we continue to be committed to keep the covenant we have made. Sure there are disagreements and "bumpy roads," but there is a consistency of a Savior who is always there when we need him. In a day and age when the United States has reported over one million divorces every year since 1986, we need to remind ourselves of the truth and concentrate on keeping the marriage of today together. We do this instead of asking Jesus as the Pharisees did, "When can I get a divorce?"

Whenever I think about the work that preserving a good marriage involves, I like to remember love stories like this one: In 1989, Joy McCarthy and Scott Carpenter met at Aurora Advent Christian Church. Their first date was to a Christian concert. Scott sat on his glasses, experienced his first belly bomb (White Castle burgers), and enjoyed the added company of Jay McBride and Adam Harding. The next date was to Joy's winter dance. A song was deemed as "our song," and the relationship of two best friends began.

> In the same way that Jesus has unconditional love for us, we need to see through Jesus' eyes and look past the faults of our spouse.

Five months into dating, we were looking through the McCarthy wedding album. There in the pages was a picture that looked like one I had seen before. Questions and answers were given with surprising results. We discovered that Rev. Ernest V. Carpenter, my grandfather, had married David and Marlene McCarthy, Joy's parents, and that my father, Brent Carpenter, had been the ring bearer in their wedding. My grandfather also married Brent and Glenda Carpenter, my parents, on June 6, 1970. "It's a small world (in the Advent Christian Church) after all!" It seemed only natural that my grandfather should marry Joy and me.

Lessons learned

Growing up, I saw the best married couple in the world work through their hard times and triumph in their

good times. Joy also remembers the guidance given to her by the love shared by David and Marlene. The lessons that were learned from our parents are a key factor in the relationship we, as a couple, experience today. First and foremost, we are committed to Christ. To build anything, you must have a solid foundation, or the structure will not last. On the solid foundation of God, our marriage has real hope in the society of demolition crews—raunchy programs like *Melrose Place*, and the pipeline of sewage from television talk shows. A meaningful prayer life is also essential to this devoted relationship. Joy and I are at opposite ends of a pyramid, with God at the top. The closer we come to God, the closer we get to each other.

The second lesson is unconditional love. You will face tough times in your married relationship. In the same way that Jesus has unconditional love for us, we need to see through Jesus' eyes and look past the faults of our spouse. I recently read the following: "Before getting married we need to keep our eyes open wide, when we get married we need to keep our eyes half-way open." There is good news for Christians, though. "In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Get ahold of the truth of Jesus and realize that through him we see the reality of unconditional love in a conditional world. This unconditional love is seen best in Paul's letter to the Philippians. He wrote, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3).



Rev. Ernest Carpenter (top, center) at the wedding of his grandson, Scott Carpenter and his wife, Joy. Earlier in his ministry, Rev. Carpenter performed the wedding ceremonies for Joy's parents: Rev. and Mrs. David S. McCarthy (left), and Scott's parents: Rev. and Mrs. Brent Carpenter (right).

Lastly, communication. Granted there are several differences between men and women. One is how they communicate. The husband may be content to spend his hours staring at the television, while the wife may desire a complete dialogue about the day's activities and what they plan to do tomorrow. When you recognize these differences in communication, you need to act on it and give yourself, unconditionally, to communicate with your spouse. Discuss the day, your hopes and dreams, your relationship to Christ, and then anything else that needs to be discussed.

This is only the beginning for us of trying to understand the many lessons our parents have taught us. With the increase of stress and problems comes the reassurance that our parents have been there already and have taught us by action and deed to follow Jesus Christ and make our marriage one that centers around him. Joy and I will try to always remember the lessons taught by our parents. I hope, also, that our story will encourage you to stay committed to your marriage covenant. And remember, your marriage will be an example that your children will follow. ❑

A graduate of Aurora University, Scott Carpenter is youth pastor of Dulin's Grove Advent Christian Church and a second-year student at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, N.C.

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serve God with your gifts? Being in a place of service for God helps us to be accountable in our lives. For instance, we will tend to resist sin if we know that we have to get up in front of fifth-graders next Sunday and talk with them about how important it is for them to guard their lives in Christ.

If you have had a hard time getting started in the spiritual area, talk with your pastor about it. Be willing to admit that you are just beginning. Don't let your male ego stand in the way of doing what you know is right. *On the other hand, if you have walked long with the Lord, guard against being complacent about God. Our relationships with Christ take continual work and energy at every level.* Real moral strength and decisive action will increasingly mark our lives as we daily fall more deeply in love with God.

4. Count the cost. Perhaps it will help us to keep our heads in the real world if we think about the consequences of infidelity. I can't help but play through my mind regularly the reality that I write books aimed at encouraging others toward a more effective life in Christ. How quickly my credibility and work in Christ could be destroyed. I know my vulnerabilities. The Devil knows them too. I am never surprised when confronted with an opportunity to sin. My prayers are that I will have godly wisdom to see through the temptations to the ugly consequences of sin. No one is immune. Many great leaders in ministry have toppled and have never fully recovered from the consequences of a momentary transgression. It is never worth it.

I think about the fact that sin grieves the Lord I love. I think about hurting Judie and the kids. Their love toward me and trust in me are so evident. They thank God in their prayers for a family that sticks together, a family they can count on. I think about how long I have been

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Reflecting God's Image Through JOY

Angela Johnson
Taylorsville, N.C.

WHAT IS JOY? Where does it come from? How do we get it? Once we have it, is it ours to keep? Can it be stolen? How can we be joyful when bad things happen to us?

When I looked in the Bible for references on joy, I also found the words "happiness" and "gladness of heart." Joy is not a temporary emotion, but a condition of the heart and soul that develops as we grow in Christ and believe that we are truly heirs to all the great promises found in God's Word. It's one of the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians. As we become more Christ-centered, love for God and love for others, especially within the body of Christ, fills our lives so there is less room for negativity.

Now Satan will not sit back and watch this happen without making some effort to stop it. He tosses adversity into our lives. Remember Job? The way we handle difficulties can become a source of joy as we are able to thank God and turn stress into something positive. It not only defeats Satan in our lives, but it also builds up those whose lives we influence. Adversity can be a source of growth and maturity that empowers us to be encouragers to others. How often have we questioned why we have had to endure hardship and then later have confessed that it has led us to a deeper relationship not only with God, but with someone else? In my work with hospice, it's not uncommon to hear terminally ill persons or members of their families tell how the current circumstances have changed their lives or lifestyles. Part of that discussion usually includes how their priorities have changed. They have been forced to deal with a part of life that is most difficult—the reality of death and the importance of being prepared for it. In spite of the hardships many of them have endured—the pain involved with their illness, the economic devastation that has sometimes occurred, the emotional trauma of watching someone they love suffer or waste away—most have reached a place of acceptance. It's not unusual to come away inspired and grateful after a visit in those homes. How many times have we said, "I'm glad this happened because it made me stop and think?"

With this in mind, we need to remind ourselves that we are citizens of a spiritual kingdom and should conduct ourselves in a manner that is suitable for citizenship there. We must strive to be consistent in our lifestyle because we have confidence in who we are—children of a great God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Isn't that wonderful? Everything is ours through Jesus. How can we not be happy?

Sharing our joy

So what do we do with our joy? Can it be hidden if we really have it? Can it be stolen or lost? It is up to us. Feeling sorry for ourselves is part of human nature and can some-

times get us some needed attention, even if it is negative. We are responsible for ourselves and our own joy and salvation. We become what we practice. If we have real joy, it's difficult to hide. Because we want to belong, it is sometimes difficult to turn a negative situation or discussion around. However, if you can do it, accentuating the positive can be contagious. Yes, the Devil can steal our joy if we allow ourselves to lose focus, but it could be that we are throwing it away. Active ministry helps to prevent attitude sabotage. Recognizing the suffering of others and contrasting it to your own circumstances, praying for them, encouraging them and being thankful for the opportunity for service that has been provided helps to get "self" back in proper perspective.

Suffering for the cause of Christ is one sign that we are doing something right. However, sometimes our suffering is a direct result of our own waywardness. Also, when we maintain our personal integrity, purity of spirit, and moral standards as Christians, we find that we do not really "fit" in most of the time. The apostle Paul says we should be thankful for this. When we look back on those times when we felt left out or even persecuted for our stance, we can experience joy because we have had a victory over Satan's attempt to rob us of our reward. We can laugh in his face and turn our backs on him because we are secure in the protective presence of God. We can be happy knowing that we have taken our place along with Paul as examples for those who follow us.

Conclusion

There are a few folks who seem to enjoy disharmony, conflict, and anxiety. But most do not. As Christians, we are admonished to dwell on things that are good, positive, and proven by Scripture. We are to be peacemakers in the face of conflict, prayer warriors against anxiety, and in an attitude of gratitude to ward off negativism. It takes faith; it takes practice; it takes humility; and it takes courage. Some folks are more gifted than others at seeing the lighter side of life. It is good for us to be able to laugh at ourselves.

David Jeremiah's book, *Turning Toward Joy*, is based on the book of Philippians and includes a personal and group study section. There are notes, commentaries and an extensive bibliography. In a chapter entitled "The Joy of Security," he points out that the Philippian believers were instructed to practice the things which they had heard, seen, learned, and received from Paul. The items on his action list included these:

Philippians. . .

1:9	Love more.
1:9-10	Have greater discernment. Be sincere and without offense.
1:11	Be filled with fruits of righteousness.
1:27	Have conduct worthy of the Gospel.
1:27	Stand fast in one spirit.
1:27	Strive together for the Gospel.
2:2	Be likeminded, of one accord.
2:3	Esteem others better than yourselves.
2:12	Work out your own salvation in fear/trembling.
2:14	Do things without complaining/disputing.
2:16	Hold fast the Word of Life.
3:1-3	Look out for false teachers.

The real secret is found in giving—giving away everything to God. Luke writes, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38). God has put us where he wants us and provided everything we need to do what he put us here to do. If we don't have the joy we desire, we're probably looking in the wrong direction. We must give expression to love. We must have fellowship with other Christians. We must face adversity with praise and thanksgiving. We must study and pray to gain the mind of Christ. We must recognize that success for the Christian is not measured in material ways. Start every day by thanking God for it. ❑

Angela Johnson is active at Fellowship Advent Christian Church in Taylorsville, N.C., where she has served as organist, choir director, treasurer, and Sunday school teacher. She is the business manager for Hospice of Alexander County and a patient/family support volunteer. A graduate of Lenoir-Rhyne College, she and her husband Steve have three sons.

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ring that week which I have worn since. However, I occasionally wear it on my right hand, as is the custom in Venezuela.

All of us have weak spots. We call them "Achilles' heels" or "chinks in our armor!" How did that gnat manage to find that one spot to sting? How is it that temptation to do wrong seems to strike when we are weakest and most vulnerable? It's no secret. Scripture tells us that there is an enemy of our souls who knows our "weak spot."

But Scripture also tells us that God knows our weakness, too! What good news that is! There is help for all of us and strength when we need it! There is armor available that has no chinks. There is *forgiveness* when we have fallen victim to temptation! We have only to ask God in true repentance. What an encouraging thought for today! ❑

Roy L. Morrison
Olustee, Fla.

BEING A CHAPLAIN at a large Florida correctional facility allows me to view other religious groups from a close range, an opportunity I probably wouldn't have as the pastor of a church in an average city, town, or village. I've been able to hear some doctrinal points, philosophies, and interesting observations of biblical situations. Seeing, first hand, the various interpretations of Scripture, the flavoring of Bible prophecy, and the little nuances of definition that make certain Bible stories all fit the preconceived mold of a particular religious belief gives me a unique perspective.

Recently I was in one of those meetings as part of my role as the senior chaplain here at Baker Correctional Institution. The minister in this special service (not a Christian service) was looking at the Genesis account of Cain and Abel. He made a statement that triggered many thoughts and questions in my head. I heard him say something like this: "Cain killed Abel because he was envious of his brother. So envy was the root cause." Immediately, I asked myself if that statement was accurate. Did Cain indeed kill Abel because of envy? Or was envy simply the fruit and not the root?

In reading over that portion of Genesis that deals with Cain's attitude of the heart, it may be evident that the root isn't envy toward Abel, but rebellion toward God. First, God begins to deal with Cain in verse six after Cain showed his feelings through his body language (noted in verse 5). Scripture merely says, "So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast." However, I see him with his head hanging like a limp rubber ball with only the string of his neck holding it on his slumping shoulders. He wears his anger and disdain on his face. Now I realize the Scripture isn't that specific, but I've seen people who get angry with God and feel sorry for themselves. The fruit of that root of bitterness and rebellion is evident in their body language, the conversation, and the "secret sins" they commit.

God spoke then

Continuing on into verse six, "Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.'" Oddly enough, Cain ignores God's advice. Why? Why would anyone ignore the advice of the God of all creation? What made Cain fail to heed God's warning? In fact, in today's language, here is what God said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face disfigured? If you remain happy and cheerful, will you not be accepted? But if you do not remain happy and cheerful (but feel sorry for yourself and rebel), the fruit of your rebellion crouches at the door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." The implication here is that Cain can overcome by being cheerful in spite of rejection. He can look to the Lord for help in doing better next time. He can learn from his experience. But, if he continues on his present course the fruit that will be borne from the root he's allowing to grow in the garden of his mind will bring destruction. God tells Cain to "master it." Master what? The sin of envy? No! God is telling Cain to master his own feelings by doing what God suggests; being cheerful in the face of adversity. That's not to say that everything is "OK" and we're living in some Pollyanna state of being. God has made provision for us to be overcomers of our natural feelings and tendencies through his Spirit.

God speaks today

In the New Testament we have two clear passages that admonish us to be happy and cheerful in adversity. These two Scripture references actually tell us to be overcomers of our own feelings of rebellion during those times when God doesn't seem to care, or it seems he's rejected our efforts to please him. How can we do that? The first passage taken from Ephesians 5:20-21 gives us the method. "Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Apply this passage to the Cain and Abel scenario, and the advice may sound like, "Cain, no matter what it appears to be, give God thanks (don't rebel) and ask your brother to help you make a correct sacrifice."

The second New Testament passage is 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Had Cain applied this, his attitude would have changed the course of history. But Cain didn't listen to God's voice. Have we changed any? Well, it seems that many of the incarcerated men I've counseled with over the years say they heard that still, small voice telling them they needed to get their lives right. That was before they committed the crime that brought them to prison. But they ignored it. Are we all a bit like Cain? Do we want to be left alone in our self-pity so we can shake our fist at God and do something sinful to show him a thing or two?

Paul speaks about this wrestling match we have with our old nature. In Romans 7, the Apostle seems to say defeat is evident—and it is—unless we submit to God through the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:1), being joy-filled and cheer-filled in those times when even God seems to be against us.

Remembering Vinnie

Recently I read a short article in *Inside Journal* (a Prison Fellowship publication for inmates) that described a young man incarcerated here at Baker about a year or so ago. Vinnie was a young Christian who thought he was going to get out of prison on a certain date. But suddenly things changed and for reasons unknown to him the Florida Department of Corrections decided to take away some of his credits toward ending his sentence. In the face of this great adversity, Vinnie smiled, displayed genuine joy and happiness and translated that inner-peace into a positive effect on others. He did what was "right." God blessed his faith and within a short time the Department of Corrections restored the time credits they had taken and Vinnie was released.

On the contrary, I've seen men who had the same thing happen to them that Vinnie did. In the midst of their loss of "gain time" their faith failed, rebellion set in, they lost their joy in the face of adversity and they fell away from their walk with God. Jude 11 says, "Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain. . ."

Even though adversity comes, and it will, we must make a determination to face it with one thing in mind. That is, God's Word will never fail. He promises us that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). If we keep that in mind, we can overcome our feelings of despair and defeat that stem from rebellion's root and remain cheerful in the face of adversity. ❑

Veteran Advent Christian pastor Roy Morrison serves as senior chaplain at Baker Correctional Institution in Sanderson, Florida.

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life, and with the redemptive power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But for that to happen, we Christians must live our Christianity, especially in a corporate sense.

Jesus told his disciples, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). God doesn't need paramilitary organizations roaming the United States trumpeting some survivalist ideology. Whether we like it or not, the future of the United States is in his sovereign hands. What he needs are followers of Jesus who practice love for one another, who bring their Christian faith to bear on all aspects of human life, and who are committed to telling the good news of Jesus Christ in a society that's increasingly filled with violence, despair, and hopelessness. ❑

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

July

1 Pray that God will strengthen Pastor **Amos Gbaa** as he continues to establish an Advent Christian congregation in Ghana.

2 Praise God for the faithfulness of **Liberian** Advent Christians as they continue to proclaim the gospel in their war-torn nation.

3 Pray that as Advent Christian congregations complete their **Penny Crusade** campaigns, God will use their efforts to undergird his kingdom work.

4 As the **United States** celebrates its 219th anniversary, pray that God would bring revival to his people in the U.S. and healing to the nation.

5 Praise God for the faithfulness of Advent Christian followers of Jesus Christ in **Malaysia** who face opposition as they proclaim the gospel in an Islamic nation.

6 Pray that God will comfort the family of Advent Christian missionary **Lucus Devasahayam** after his sudden death in March.

7 As this column is written, we still have not received final word on the permanent visas for our four new Advent Christian missionaries to India—**Tim and Ruth Fox**; and **Bill and Celia Jewell**. Pray that God will work and that his purpose will be carried forward.

8 Praise God for the growth of many Advent Christian congregations in **India** as pastors and individual believers proclaim the gospel in their communities.

9 As **Beryl Joy Hollis**, **Barbara White**, and **Marion Damon** prepare to retire, pray that their last few weeks in India will be especially productive.

10 Praise God for the opportunities that he is opening for Advent Christian mission work to begin in **New Zealand** and **Honduras**.

11 Pray that Advent Christian missionaries **Russell and Noelle Carle** will sense God's direction as they begin their ministry in New Zealand.

12 Praise God for the faithfulness and ministry of Advent Christian pastors and national conference leaders in the **Philippines**.

13 Pray that God will give wisdom and strength to

Warren Prestidge as he directs the ministry of Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

14 Pray that God will give strength to **David Vignali** for the many responsibilities he carries out in the Philippines.

15 Praise God for the opportunities that believers from several Advent Christian churches here at home have had to participate in **short-term mission teams** in Mexico and other Latin American nations.

16 Pray that the 1995 **Penny Crusade** will be the best ever as it provides needed support for Advent Christian work and the expansion of Advent Christian missions.

17 Praise God for the continuing opportunities that **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** have to communicate God's love in the inner city of Memphis, Tennessee.

18 Pray that **Francis and Lyne** will know God's strength as they are involved in several summer-ministry programs.

19 Praise God for Japanese Advent Christians who are working with other Japanese followers of Christ to provide support and aid in the continued aftermath of the **Kobe earthquake**.

20 Pray for the people in the **Kobe** area of Japan who continue to rebuild after the earthquake.

21 Pray for **Karen Rigney** and **Margaret Helms** as they continue to communicate the gospel through their lives and ministries in Japan.

22 Pray for **Steven and Ann Lay** as they return for their second term of missionary service in Japan.

23 In the words of the psalmist, "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love" (Psalm 103:8). Praise God for his **grace and mercy**.

24 Pray that God will use his church throughout the world to communicate the **good news** of Christ's love and forgiveness from sin.

25 Praise God for the effective church-planting ministry that Liberian Advent Christian pastor **Amos Gbaa** continues to have in Ghana.

26 Pray that the Advent Christians who remain in **Liberia** will share God's protection and strength with all followers of Christ in that war-torn nation.

27 Pray for Liberian Advent Christian leader **Ben Cleon Sr.**, as he continues to be held prisoner by one of the warring factions in that country.

28 Praise God for the vital ministry that **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** continue to have with the Advent Christian Church in El Florido, Mexico.

29 Pray that God will provide guidance and direction as Advent Christian missions seeks church planters for ministry in **Mexico**.

30 Pray for Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** as he plans and manages the work of Advent Christian missions across the world.

31 Pray that Advent Christians in **Nigeria** will have opportunities to proclaim the gospel in their nation.

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trying to impact other family members for Christ. How quickly years of prayer and work can go down the drain.

I think about my obligation to my brothers and sisters in Christ to contribute to the positive image of Christianity in our community. We never sin in a vacuum. A pastor in Rochester, Minnesota, was driven by sexual lust to pose as a doctor and examine women in the hospitals there. I lived in Rochester when the discovery was made. Think of the devastating effect such exposure has on the minds of those who might be considering Christ. I pray that I will never contribute to this kind of breach of trust.

There are, of course, other practical matters like AIDS, venereal disease (I might even unwittingly infect Judie), and unwanted pregnancy. There are financial and career problems. There is the shame and guilt that affects the whole of your life and relationships. I'm sure you can add to this list. Somewhere near the top should be the realization that such an act would bring great delight to our enemy, Satan, who is in battle against God for our very souls.

It is important to remember that even though thinking of the consequences of our sinful action can help us resist the sin of adultery, *we are only truly moral in a biblical sense when we refuse to sin primarily out of our love for God and for what he is trying to accomplish in the world.* All lesser reasons are self-centered. If we choose not to sleep with our secretaries just because we might get caught and lose our job, we are thinking of ourselves. We are aiming at something different in the Christian life. Self-centered reasons for resisting sin will only help us temporarily. Use whatever works when you need it to keep from falling. But remember that self-centered motivations are never strong enough to bring consistency over the long haul.

Our goal in developing moral character is to get to the place where we act faithfully and consistently simply because to do otherwise would bring harm to the person and cause of the God we love. Thinking of suffering consequences may help us resist for a while, but only a real and lasting love for God will guard and buttress our fight for life. ❑

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Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
Box 17, Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Marion Damon (March 27)
Box 17, Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA
Ph. 011-91-04-542-40713

Beryl Joy Hollis (December 16)
American Advent Mission
Velacheri, Madras 600 042
INDIA

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Warren Prestidge
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
145 S. Calumet Ave.
Aurora, IL 60506

Karen Rigney (June 5)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-794-62-8744

Floyd and Musa Powers
(October 8 and February 28)
15-3 1 Chome Higashi Fujie
Akashi Shi, Hyogoken 673
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-078-925-3416

Margaret Helms (September 18)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
Bududuram Refugee Camp
National Mobilization Program
Box 46
Accra, GHANA

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

Liberia and China
Contact Missions Office for addresses

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devasahayam
Beulah Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Rev. T. and Ruth Devairakkam
33, Jalan Intan 4/1
Taman Intan,
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Mexico

Carlos Quintero
387 W. Poppyfields Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
(818) 791-2447

Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Carlos Quintero

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Vice-president
Harold Patterson; World Missions
Millie Griswold; Resource Development

P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

Russell Giasson; Services
Robert Mayer; Publications
Brent Carpenter; Church Relations

New Zealand

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eventually to expand into, to be sure that we will have the financial base to continue the expansion of Advent Christian World missions if the Lord tarries. Australia and Europe also beckon us to share the gospel with them and to build strong churches.

New Zealand is a mission field because there are thousands of lost people who need to hear that Jesus saves. We are going primarily because we are burdened to reach people for Jesus Christ. We have a door open into New Zealand and there has come a call from some of our brethren there to "come over and help us." We're responding to that call in sending Russell and Noelle Carle as missionaries to New Zealand, to be followed by others as the Lord provides and leads.

New Zealand is a different kind of mission field, for it is not only a field for evangelism, but a place where we are already partnering with like-minded Christians to continue to reach a lost world for Jesus Christ. Different? Yes. Special? Yes. Ordained of God? We believe so! Join with us as we prayerfully look together for God's blessing upon the opening of Advent Christian mission work in New Zealand. ❑

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Advent Christian
WITNESS
July/August 1995

The First Generation X

An Interview with Todd Hahn

Raised Without Religion



Baby Busters

Features

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They're known as "Generation X," young adults between ages eighteen and twenty-eight. Todd Hahn talks with the *Witness* about how we can reach this generation for Jesus Christ.

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What role does disciplemaking play in world missions? In the view of Harold Patterson, Jesus' challenge to make disciples lies at the heart of the mission enterprise.

Four Steps Toward Practicing Christian Love 12

Jesus teaches that our discipleship will be demonstrated by Christian love. David McCarthy suggests some practical steps we can take to practice Christian love.

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Bill O'Connor suggests that growing into Christian maturity is much like our physical and emotional growth into adulthood.

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A new generation of young adults is emerging in the United States. Starting on page four, Todd Hahn discusses what makes Generation X unique and how we can communicate the gospel to them.

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Advent Christian WITNESS

Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria



First Signs of Revival?

SOMETHING special may be happening. That's the sense that many followers of Jesus, myself included, have picked up during the last two or three years. No, the world is not getting better and yes, our lives are becoming more stressful. While human technology grows more complex, life seems more uncertain. Many view the future with despair, not hope.

The crisis that faces the United States and other western countries is not primarily economic or political, but moral. Even many whom we would view as hostile to evangelical Christianity now recognize this reality. And Christians in Canada and the United States are discovering that human technology, political activism, and fancy programming cannot fix our deepest problems. Perhaps we're at the point where God can do his best work among us. Because once we admit our inability to solve the problems our society faces through slick programs and technology, we're ready for God to work through us.

How should we judge a movement or a ministry? How should we evaluate the special services held in many local congregations?

Two primary tools

Historically, God has used two primary tools, prayer and Scripture, to facilitate revival in North America. For several years, many Christians have prayed that God would renew his church and bring healing to our land, and since 1992, several movements have sprung up that may be the first signs of God's answer. In many cities and towns, Christians are banding together across denominational lines to pray for their churches and their communities in "concerts of prayer." This year over one million men will take part in over a dozen Promise Keepers stadium rallies, gatherings that will encourage them to love God, love their families, and be agents of integrity, racial reconciliation, and obedience to the Scriptures. And during the last six months a wave of spiritual renewal has spread across a host of Christian college campuses.

Are these and other movements the first signs of a new awakening destined to empower God 's church? How can we discern whether or not any movement or work that claims to be Christian is authentic? Do the special services we hold in our congregations deserve the term "revival?" I've found some help in answering those questions from a surprising source. With all that has been written about revival during the twentieth century, the best writing that I've discovered comes from the pen of Jonathan Edwards, a colonial New England pastor considered by many to be the greatest theological thinker that American Christianity has ever produced.

Edwards wrote his *Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* in the midst of America's first Great Awakening. During the 1730s and 1740s, George Whitefield and other evangelists preached the gospel in cities and towns up and down the Atlantic Coast. They didn't limit their preaching to church sanctuaries, but took their message to town squares and open-air meeting places. Estimates are that 50,000 were converted to Christ and countless others were strengthened in their faith. But there was opposition to Whitefield's message and style. Some considered the services too emotional. Others felt that events surrounding the revival had no biblical precedent.

Five distinguishing marks

In response, Edwards declared that because God is sovereign, "We ought not to limit God where he has not limited himself." Therefore we cannot judge whether or not a movement or ministry is from the Spirit of God simply because it's

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Correction

In Andy Bjorklund's May 1995 article "Arranging the Banquet Table," we left out a line at the top of the right hand column on page nine. The sentence should read, "The Humanist Manifesto 2 (early 1970s) which called for 'a system of world law and world order based on transnational federal government.'" We apologize for our error.

AN INTERVIEW WITH TODD

The First Generation Raised Without RELIGION

THE MEDIA CALLS them "Baby Busters," "Thirteeners," and "Generation X." But it's hard to label the eighty million people born between 1961 and 1981. They are diverse in many ways and people born during these years do not like labels. Yet there are some characteristics, qualities, and understandings about life that many within the generation share. And those things set them apart from their older counterparts in the Baby Boomer and World War II generations.

Many older Christians and churches struggle with how to reach this generation for Christ and incorporate them into the life of the church. What makes Baby Busters different? How can we communicate the gospel to them? For answers to those and other questions, the *Witness* sent Leslie Suderley to interview Todd Hahn, associate pastor for outreach at Forest Hill Church in Charlotte. Todd is a Buster himself, a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Seminary, and someone who is involved in evangelism with Baby Busters. A number of Advent Christians had the opportunity to hear one of Todd's workshops on ministry to this generation at last year's Mid-Atlantic Sunday School Convention. He and his colleague Dave Verhaagen are the authors of *Reckless Hope: Understanding and Reaching Baby Busters*, to be published early in 1996 by Baker Book House.

Todd, how did you get involved in ministry with Baby Busters as an avenue of ministry in the church?

I remember Frances Schaeffer said once that it's the task of the church in every generation to reinterpret, to recontextualize the gospel for that generation. So you're always asking yourself, "How do I do that, as someone who has a passion for the gospel, who has a passion for a generation." And when you have that vision, what

you do is seek to understand the generation of which you're a part. I am a member of "Generation X." I'm a "Baby Buster" who was born within that time frame.

As I began to understand what our generation looked like, I saw two things. One, we're in danger of losing an entire generation that has no previous exposure to the church, or to the gospel. And two, the church in general is not equipped, and does not seem to be making great strides toward becoming equipped for reaching this generation, of doing the things we must do to contextualize the gospel for this generation.

What is a "Baby Buster?"

There are several different ways to define us. One is by chronological age. Let me tell you first where the term came from. You have the term "Baby Boomer" which has been around a long time. A great rise in births took place immediately after World War II. As soldiers came home, and life got back to normal, the number of births skyrocketed. Then, during the early 1960s the birthrate dramatically slowed and you went from boom to bust, to use a stock market term. So the name "Baby Buster" came from looking at the charts. You see a lot of births followed, all of a sudden, by a dramatic drop-off. And at about the time that happened is where the Baby Boom generation is cut off.

"Generation X" is a title that's being used even more than "Baby Buster." That title was originally the name of a rock band back in the 1970s. A Canadian novelist named Douglas Coupland wrote a book called, *Generation X*—sort of the defining novel for the generation. He borrowed the term and it's gotten popular usage since then.

There are two schools of thought on when the Baby Busters or Generation X actually began. One is 1961, the other is 1964. I don't take a firm stand on that. When I think of who a Baby Buster is today, it's someone thirty or under, actually between ages twenty and thirty.

But how you actually define the generation is not by demographics or birth year, but by approach to life and outlook on the world. The outlook on the world that Busters have is radically different from Boomers. Boomers were, in many ways, products of the 1960s, with its social upheaval, sexual revolution, and anti-war protests. And Boomers are identified with the 1980s, the "greed is good" decade—insider-trading, Michael Millken, and Ivan Bosky. Baby Busters have inherited the legacy of three decades: the turbulent '60s, the "me-decade" '70s, and the the "greed-decade" '80s. Busters are now left to pick up the pieces. So a Buster is someone who is now between ages 20 and 30 and who has an approach to life that characterizes that generation.

How do ways of thinking differ between Baby Busters and Baby Boomers?

Let me back up and explain some of the factors that have shaped the Baby Buster generation. First, the divorce rate of parents of Busters has skyrocketed out of control. So many Busters are from broken homes. And many Busters were latch-key kids. This generation has experienced



Snapshots of Generation X

I don't mean to brag when I tell you my schedule: In addition to carrying a full load of classes, I had two jobs that added up to full-time work. During the week, I went to school (11 a.m. to 8 p.m.) two days and to work at one job (8 a.m. to 7 p.m.) on the other three. On Sundays I worked at my second job (4 p.m. to 12:20 a.m.). Sometimes I wonder if I got an early look at what "real life" is going to be like. . . .

—Sharyn Wizda, George Washington University Class of 1991 in the *Washington Post*

sky-rocketing violence and drug use. MTV has defined this generation in many ways. AIDS is something else that this generation has inherited. So they're heirs of some dramatic social factors.

While there's no such thing as a typical Buster, many in this generation are products of broken homes who played Space Invaders or watched MTV. They never learned what it was like to relate to other people well, because it wasn't modeled in the home. In the last few years, as Busters have gotten out of college, they've entered into a rapidly-shrinking economy. Those from earlier generations—Baby Boomers and the World War II generation—kept their noses clean, went to high school, maybe to college. And when they got out, there was a job waiting, a good paying job. They went to work for IBM or some big company and worked their way up the ladder. For Busters, that's not the case. In addition to the factors I just mentioned, Busters face a shrinking economy

Could you expand on that?

Busters sense that our generation has inherited this shrinking economy, not to mention a crippling national debt. Boomers had their party in the 1980s, and what is our generation left with? Picking up the pieces. There are very few good jobs. Coupland uses the term "McJobs." They're fast-food jobs that won't fill you up, won't satisfy you. They're dead-end jobs in the service sector with little future. So a Buster's outlook is in many cases one of resentment toward Boomers, the sense that, (whether it's accurate or not), "They've had their party, now we've got to clean up the mess." And they're angry because of broken families and not knowing how to relate.

Busters value relationships. They deeply want to know what it means to relate to other people. But they don't know how to do that because they haven't had a model for good relationships. In terms of worldview and values, this is a generation that grew up on relativism and pluralism. They have little sense of absolute truth out there. If there is spiritual truth, it's cafeteria style pick-your-own, gather a few ideas together and make it work for you.

So you've got a generation where many are alienated, bitter, and hopeless. One of the biggest characteristics of this generation is hopelessness. That's the bad side of things. But Busters are realistic, adaptive, entrepreneurial, and they're very comfortable with technology. So your typical Buster is someone who knows how to use a computer inside and out, but doesn't know how to relate to someone else.

Many of our readers are from the World War II generation. How would you compare that generation and the Buster generation?

Here's an interesting thing. There are vast differences and their values are incredibly different. You have traditional family values in the World War II generation, while a Buster might say, "I've never had a family, so what does that mean to me?" But if Busters are going to have heroes, they will tend to be from the World War II

The ultimate effect of our mass culture is to make children older than their years, to turn them into the knowing, cynical pseudo-adult that is by now the model kid of the TV sitcom.

—Syndicated columnist Charles Krauthammer

generation instead of the Boomer generation. Busters have a real antipathy toward Boomers, but there's sort of a respect for the World War II generation. The first election that most Busters were eligible to vote in was Ronald Reagan's second election, and they voted heavily for Reagan. Now they voted for Bill Clinton heavily, too. So it's not a politically conservative generation. But what that shows you is if Busters are going to respect anyone, it's likely to be someone from the World War II generation. They don't understand their lifestyle, they don't understand their values, they think they're quaint and old-fashioned, but they do respect the fact that people in the World War II generation had to be self-starters. They successfully fought a war. They had to create something from nothing, and they did it. So in talking about ways churches can minister to Baby Busters, one of the best ways is through mentoring relationships. World War II folks, if they can get past the loud music, the MTV, and the anger, can really have an impact on Busters.

What are some other ways that the church can minister to Busters?

Let me give you the framework for this. We don't have a blueprint for reaching Busters. Each church has to shape a ministry for itself. Two huge themes we have to use in ministering to Baby Busters are "hope" and "story." This generation has little hope economically, relationally and spiritually. Many keep spinning their wheels. The gospel is a message of hope. So as we speak to the generation, we must speak in terms of "there is hope for you, and here's what it is."

Story is the other big theme. This is a little harder to grasp. Douglas Coupland, in his novel *Generation X*, tells the story of three Busters with dead-end jobs. They drop out of life and go live together in the desert of Arizona. What they do for fun, since they don't have any money, is go out in the desert, take fried chicken, and sit around telling each other stories—stories about their lives, wild stories. And as you read you wonder what's going on.

> **[Baby] Boomers are such cultural snobs. . . . They say that the world offers more opportunities than ever these days. Yeah? By the time they're through raping the universe, there's not much of anything left for anybody. They claim we don't have the drive and the ability to get ahead in a global world. Easy to complain when you never had to take on the same challenge.**
>
> **—Robert Marx, Age 20**

Robert Jenson wrote an article in the periodical *First Things* called "A World Without a Story." His point is that we live in a world that does not have a story to bring it together. For most of our history as a culture, we were informed by the Judeo-Christian story—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jesus. It was a story that everyone knew. It made sense and gave shape to our lives. So you and I could take our experience and understand it in light of the biblical story. It was a shared, common thing that we had together.

In our post-modern world, which the Baby Buster has inherited, there is no story. There are a million stories. That's the legacy of pluralism. Many Busters have never heard of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So we live isolated lives, with no larger frame of reference to put it in. Leighton Ford has recently written a book called *The Power of Story* that effectively makes this point. Leighton says that evangelism in our age can't be done any longer with propositions, outlines of the Four Spiritual laws, or with charts. You communicate the gospel by telling a story. Busters long to have their lives connected to a larger story, to feel like there's something outside of them that they can connect to. So what we do in terms of evangelism is story-tell. Tell stories of the Bible, and put it in modern terms. We communicate that life has meaning in the context of this story. We want Busters to feel like they can link up with something bigger than themselves. In *Generation X*, one of the characters says something like, "If our lives don't have a story, there's no reason for them to be."

How does that translate into ministry?

Dr. Dave Verhaagen (whom I work with in doing research and workshops) and I have come up with three "operating values" for ministering to Busters. They're the three "Cs." Creation, Covenant, and Community. In terms of *creation*, if you ask Busters what the most important social issue is to them,

> **Most Americans did not grow up with the disheartening feeling that they will never be able to achieve their dreams. But that is how most Baby Busters feel: surprisingly hopeless in a world seen by their elders as possessing unparalleled opportunity.**
>
> **—George Barna**

> And then I felt sad because I realized that once people are broken in certain ways, they can't ever be fixed, and this is something nobody ever tells you when you are young and it never fails to surprise you as you grow older as you see the people in your life break one by one. You wonder when your turn is going to be, or if it's already happened.
>
> —Douglas Coupland

it's the environment. There's a real concern for environmentalism. If you don't address that, if you do what many churches typically do, and say "Oh, those people who care about the environment are a bunch of New-age, granola-eating tree huggers," you're going to lose many within this generation.

Say you're a Buster who cares about the environment. What would you do if the church says to you that the thing that is most important to you doesn't matter. So we've got to address that issue. And the way that we do it is realizing that as Christians we're the only people who truly have a reason to be environmentalists because of the doctrine of creation. God created the earth, gave us stewardship over it, and made it a thing of beauty. As we live out God's image in the world, we'll care about his creation as well. So we take the doctrine of creation and say to the Baby Buster concerned about the environment, "Your desire to preserve and protect the environment is wonderful. Let me tell you why there's something in you that feels that way." Then we redirect their energies into a biblical direction.

The other aspect of the Christian view of creation is this: The Bible says that when we come into a relationship with God through Christ, we are recreated—given a new heart. Busters long to be recreated and given a new heart. Once you're recreated, it means that your relationship with God and others can change, it means that things can come back together in your life again. And it means that God can begin to work and change things in your life. And you can be changed. So we can talk about those two things: creation in terms of environment and recreation in terms of relationships. Doing that will hit where Busters are.

The second value is covenant. The Bible says that God is a covenant-keeping God. When God makes a promise, he keeps it. Busters have faced more broken promises than any other generation in history. Our parents divorced. Our political leaders have lied to us. And our religious leaders have lied to us. We remember Watergate. We remember the televangelist scandals. Who can you trust?

So a church has to major on being a covenant-keeping people. We remind people, that God will never let you down. He will never violate his covenant. He's there when no one else is. But as we relate to Busters, we ourselves must become people who make and keep covenants and have integrity. We need to show Busters, hey, you may not be able to trust anyone else, but you can trust us because of God.

How can we demonstrate trust and integrity?

Through the third value: community. This is a huge value. You look at the television shows and advertising being marketed to Busters and the concept of community is powerful. Relationships with other people are a high value for Busters. The problem is, because our families have been broken, because we don't know how to relationally fit, we have no idea how to be in community. We have a value, but we don't know how to do it.

So churches have to recapture (and many congregations are recapturing this) the sense that the church is a new community of people called together to be God's people. It's the ultimate community. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, under the headship and rulership of Jesus Christ, we come together to encourage each other, support each other, be there for each other, spur one another on to love and good works. Churches that reach Busters practice real relational connectedness.

So if we're a church, we'll major on being community. Two practical things: You've got to do small groups to reach Busters, to have that taste of community. And you must develop mentoring relationships where older men and women intentionally pour their lives into younger Buster men

> If religion is to bring hope into people's lives, Busters would describe that hope as it relates to. . . ethical insight, purpose for living, and the development of greater emotional balance. Their interest in spiritual matters wanes as soon as the discussion rolls around to matters of a higher level: religion, for their purposes, must be tangible, useful and intelligent.
>
> —George Barna

and women who may not have had an older, wiser influence because of the breakdown of the family.

So you get community that way through small groups, through connectedness to something bigger than yourself, and through one-on-one mentoring relationships.

This is tough, especially for a World War II generation leader. In terms of the creation theme, one of the best ways to hook Busters into your ministry is to have an environmental action group—people who are concerned about the environment from a Christian point of view. You want an unreached people group? The environmental movement in the United States. Very little Christian influence at all. That's beginning to change; but right now, it's an almost totally unpenetrated group of people. So a church that will seek to find ways to get involved in that subculture will say to to its people, "Look, we need to work to preserve the environment from a Christian point of view" and invite Busters to take part in it. So it's hitting on an issue that's important to them but it's coming at it from a biblical perspective.

Sources: Sharon Wizda and Charles Krauthammer, from Neil Howe and Bill Strauss, *13th Gen. Abort, Retry, Ignore, Fail.* (Vantage, 1993). Robert Marx and George Barna, from George Barna, *The Invisible Generation: Baby Busters* (Barna Research Group, 1992). Douglas Coupland from *Life After God* (Pocket Books, 1994).

Does the style of a worship service matter to a Buster?

It's unlikely that you'll reach Busters with a traditional style of worship because it's so foreign to their everyday experience. Remember this generation was raised on MTV, and it's a generation that can take and process tons of images per second. Most people in the World War II generation and many Boomers as well, get their information through reading. Busters rarely read. You watch MTV, and boom, boom, the images change dramatically and rapidly. Busters are used to that. They're not going to want to sit there through a long service, through endless hymns, through some of the traditional things that we do.

Not that those things are bad. They're not. But it will be so foreign to a Buster's experience that it's like a different language. Churches will want to think about starting an alternative worship service for Busters. It cannot be predictable. It's got to be spontaneous, where there's a sense of personal involvement.

The thing is, most churches, especially traditional churches, don't have the resources to immediately change that. I'm realistic enough to know that if you've had a church operating the same way for many years, it's not instantly going to turn into a Buster-friendly church. But you can critically look at your church service and see if there are some elements you can change. And even with a traditional worship service, you can do the small groups, the mentoring, and the environmental action.

I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.
— Jesus in John 10:9-10

We've talked a lot about being sensitive to the unique needs of Baby Busters. Does the Bible speak to those issues?

Look at Ephesians 1, Colossians 1, and the first part of Romans. When you read those passages and take them seriously, you see that what God is fundamentally doing, right now, is that he's summing up all things in Christ. That's the phrase used in the first chapter of Ephesians—"summing up all things in Christ." The word there actually has to do with pulling together things that have been split apart. The Bible is clear that through Adam and Eve sin came into the world. That split everything apart—threw everything out of kilter. Relationships—our relationship to creation, our relationship with God, everything's been shattered. What God is doing right now is pulling everything back together under Christ, summing up all things in Christ. One day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. One day everything will be summed up in Christ.

If we're going to demonstrate God's activity in the world as his people, as his new community, that means we will be people who will focus on putting things back together again. Busters have inherited a shattered world—their families, the culture, the belief system that has held the culture together. If you ask Busters, "What's the big historical event that stands out to you?" they answer, the space-shuttle *Challenger* explosion. What's the image there? A spaceship shattering apart.

The gospel speaks to this generation, in biblical terms, by saying, what God wants to do is bring things back together, including you. So if we're

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Harold Patterson
Charlotte, N.C.

MY WIFE and I stood with Pastor James Devadasson and his wife Mercy in front of a three-story mall building in Kluang, Malaysia. In the middle of the second story hung a sign declaring it to be the meeting place of the Advent Christian Church. That sign was in four languages, Tamil, Malay, Chinese, and English. I thought, "What a beautiful example of our Lord's Great Commission 'to make disciples of all nations.'" In the last chapter of Matthew's gospel, Jesus challenges us, his followers, to "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to observe everything I commanded you, and surely I am with you always to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). Essentially, the Master is commanding us to disciple disciples!

Many people are surprised to learn that in the original language the only command in that Commission is the phrase "make disciples of all nations." The recent realization that this is the thrust of the Great Commission has excited many Christians, including many Advent Christians. It has been adopted as a focus for revival and expansion of the Advent Christian Church worldwide. Executive Vice President David Ross has succinctly summed it up by issuing a call to "restore a Great Commission passion to the heart of the Advent Christian Church."

For a moment, take a fresh look at this verse with me. The phrase "to make disciples" with its grammatical construction means as you go about your daily life it should be natural for you to present Christ by word and lifestyle so that others will want to follow him. As others see our example, they will desire to follow Jesus Christ. The phrase "of all nations," *panta ta ethne*, means to reach not just all nations, but people groups. It's the word from which we get our word "ethnic." In India, the word would be translated "castes." In Africa, it would be translated as "tribes." In other words, every distinct group of people on the face of the earth would hear the Gospel. And there would be those who would be converted and discipled for Christ. Whether at home or abroad, we are to reach every group with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and see people brought to Christian maturity in those groups so that they can affect others.

Winning people to Christ, and making disciples of them, are the mandates of the Great Commission. This is why we send missionaries. There are many who can hear the Gospel through radio and television. It's possible to visit various unevangelized countries and present the Gospel in meetings where people will turn to the Lord. But this is not enough. We send missionaries so that people will be taught what it means to be a Christian, and then by their life and teaching affect others. That's what Great Commission discipleship is all about!

There are a number of ways we can disciple all nations. One Christian can disciple another new Christian into the fullness of the Christian life. This strategy can revive and renew our churches. I remember how moved I was to hear the story of a young man with Down's Syndrome who had accepted Christ and came forward during an altar call to be a discipler. Fortunately, the counselor dealing with him did not turn him away as if there was no way he could be used, but instead suggested he might share what he knew with those in his special school. He was excited and started a group of his peers that would in time touch over forty lives. Incidentally, he was the only one in his church with a small group!

Whole families can be discipled. Remember the story of how Jesus went to Zacchaeus's house and his whole family received the Lord? Or the Philippian jailer that Paul witnessed to? He and his whole household were baptized. In many Asian, African, and South American countries this is an effective discipling approach. A good example of this is the Devairakkam family whose seven children are in gospel work in Malaysia, New Zealand, and England. They are in pastoral work, Bible school work and mission work. They were led to the Lord by their parents and are discipling others. I have been with some of our missionaries when they have spent time discipling a whole family into Christ. That goal is applied also when we are dealing with urban and ethnic ministries.

We can also disciple those in leadership. Think of Paul's challenge in 2 Timothy 2:2 "These things you've heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." The training of qualified disciplers is an important part of this Commission. Some of you will know Ed Whitford, a career missionary to Mexico. Ed was won to the Lord as a young man by evangelist Cully Olsen who discipled him and his wife. They would then start a mission work in Mexico where he would lead his first convert to Christ by the name of Perdo Serreto. Together they would in time start a Bible school where many young Mexicans would be trained to preach Christ to the Mexican people. Today "Pastor Pete's" son and son-in-law are leading Tecate Bible Institute in Tecate, California, training young men and women for ministry reaching many Christians and discipling them into the Lord's work.

Disciples among all peoples

Roger Greenway writes that "the Church's evangelistic task demands that every ward, apartment house, and neighborhood have a church faithful to God's Word established in it." The challenge for all Christians, including Advent Christians, is to reach all nations by making disciples and establishing churches among every

As you go about your daily life it should be natural for you to present Christ by word and lifestyle so that others will want to follow him.

ethnic group. Ralph Winter has estimated that there are 16,750 people groups among the 2.4 billion "unreached people on the earth." There are probably another 13,250 people groups among the remaining 1.8 billion of the world's population. That's our challenge. There are thousands of ethnic people who do not have at least one strong Christian congregation among them.

Think of the challenge Jesus presents us. "Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations." When Jesus gave this command to about 500 followers he looked at a world population of 2,000,000. If one man could win 3,000 converts each day, as happened at Pentecost, how long would it take him to reach the approximately six billion people who will be alive by the year 2000? The answer: 5,479 years. Someone has it figured out that if you want to reach everyone for Christ by yourself, you would have to witness to a million different people every day between 1985 and the year 2000. And yet if two people were discipled, who in turn would disciple two others every six months, the whole world could be reached with the Gospel in just 13 years!

Even with the fact that the world's un-Christian population is growing at a rate of 139,000 people each day, was Jesus giving his disciples an impossible task when he challenged them to reach the world with the Gospel? No, because he expected them to work together to be a team. Jesus gave his church a great challenge and a plan to reach the world. Only through strong discipleship training can we fulfill the Great Commission. The early missionaries, and now missionary strategists of our time, grapple not only with winning people to Christ, but establishing a growing, reproducing church in every land among every people group. The realization continues to grow, but this can only be accomplished through discipleship.

Discipling a Whole Nation

Missions involves training lay leaders, developing pastors, establishing Bible schools and seminaries, and challenging our national churches to have global vision and impact these nations. All of these are built on the concept of discipleship. One of the new and exciting thrusts in world evangelism is the work of those who have developed the concept of Discipling a Whole Nation (DAWN). Christians in a particular nation are challenged to unite and to develop a plan to establish a church in every village or settlement. A major thrust of DAWN is the Philippines where Advent Christian churches have joined enthusiastically and set a goal of 200 Advent Christian churches and 40,000 believers by the year 2000 as their part of reaching the Philippines for Christ. Our Mission Department enthusiastically endorses this approach and is providing additional funding for the Philippine Conference for this outreach. We expect to be part of other DAWN programs in India, New Zealand, Honduras, and others as the Lord leads.

Advent Christian World Missions has been involved in discipling for some time now, and some of our national churches are outpacing our work here at home. In India, much work has gone into leading lay leaders who are discipling small groups in their churches. In the Philippines, Advent Christians have used "the Philip method" where believers are challenged to share what they know with their friends and then come back

Advent Christian World Missions has been involved in discipling for some time now, and some of our national churches are outpacing our work here at home.

for another lesson to go further. I was touched in the Philippines a few years ago by a young teenager who accepted the Lord and was learning to give his testimony. He was anxious to learn just the right things to say so he could share his faith with his classmates and have them know the joy he had found. We see it again in India in our School of Evangelism founded by Marion Damon to train and disciple young men to establish new churches. We see it in Japan as Steven and Ann Lay teach English as a means of evangelism and discipling converts to reach out into the community. We see it in our work in America's cities where young urban pastors disciple those from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. They are called in ministry to reach

We send missionaries so that people will be taught what it means to be a Christian, and then by their life and teaching affect others.

out into their community. And we want to expand our discipleship training. We are in the process of planning a Bible college in Nigeria. We want to do a better job in our training of urban ministry leaders. We want to hold pastoral training conferences across our mission. And we face an exciting challenge of discipling our national conferences into becoming mission sending groups as well. Together we will build a partnership in reaching whe world for Christ.

Another strategy of our worldwide discipleship effort is to help disciple the many groups that contact us from all over the world who share similar understanding of Scripture and ask us for help in ways to declare the message of life only in Christ. As Advent Christians, we have renewed our commitment to ignite the Great Commission passion throughout all our Advent Christian work at home and overseas. We want to be found faithful when Jesus Christ returns, that we have gone and made disciples.

In China, a faithful Advent Christian pastor is discipling leaders who

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David S. McCarthy
Portsmouth, N.H.

Four Steps Toward Practicing Christian Love

TRUSTING Christ as Savior and Lord is the most important decision you will ever make. That decision cancels past sins and brings one into the family of God. But once a man or woman takes that step, and receives God's forgiveness, why is that person left in a world of pressure and frustration? Wouldn't it make more sense for the Lord to take us immediately to himself, or at least, give us easier going until we reach the end of life?

There is only one reason why he allows his people to stay in a world that seems booby-trapped against believers. God wants to showcase his followers to a lost and dying world. He wants outsiders to see the difference he can make in individuals who turn their lives over to him. One quality God wants to show off is Christian love.

But what is love? If we are to demonstrate it, we had better know exactly what it looks like. Basically there are two ideas about love, but only one can be correct.

Getting or giving?

There is the "Playboy philosophy" that says love means getting satisfaction. According to this view, love means getting all you can from another person. It involves grasping, holding, and satisfying oneself by using someone else. You know it's love if it feels right. This philosophy is based on the proposition that it is more blessed to receive than to give.

But the Bible offers a different view of love. According to Scripture, love doesn't mean *getting*, but *giving*. We can see this by checking three Bible passages that talk about Jesus' love for us. According to Ephesians 5:25, He "loved the church, and *gave* himself for it." In Galatians 2:20, the Son of God "loved me and *gave* himself for me." John 3:16 says that God "so loved the world that he gave." So in the Bible love is not primarily a feeling, but an act of the will that prompts a costly deed on behalf of another. At its best, love is giving yourself to someone else.

Love means to serve and demand nothing in return. It means to sacrifice in order to give support and encouragement. In William Barclay's words, the Bible word for love means "unconquerable benevolence. No matter what a man may do to us by way of injury or humiliation, we will never seek anything but his highest good." The Bible term for love means that we make a deliberate effort never to seek anything but the best, even for those who seek the worst for us.

You don't have to be a genius to figure out that it's impossible to show this kind of love to people who treat you unfairly. The old self is too strong, the wounds too deep to work out "unconquerable benevolence" to every person who tries our patience.

But this is where the Holy Spirit comes to our aid. Paul writes in Romans 15:30 about "the love of the Spirit." By this, the apostle means, the love inspired by the Spirit, or produced by the Spirit. Paul says almost the same thing in Romans 5:5; "God's love has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Amplified Version). Phillips' translation is even more graphic: "Flooding through our hearts by the Holy Spirit."

Christians receive the Holy Spirit into their lives when they trust Christ as Savior. His flooding presence brings the love of God into our hearts. The Spirit is like a channel that carries water from afar to turn dry land into rich soil. As long as the debris of sin does not clog the channel, God's love will keep on flowing. But if we allow the world to take over in our lives, the system will be choked and love will no longer flow. The only answer is for the "dry Christian" to confess and forsake his sin so that God's channel may be reopened.

Making God's love a reality

An anonymous writer tells how he discovered the Holy Spirit's help in producing love. He and his sister were opposites in many ways. In fact their only points in common seemed to be selfishness, pride, and an easily-wounded ego. They argued and accused each other right through college into young adulthood.

Eventually the writer became a Christian, and the Lord convicted the young man of his lack of love. He wrote a long letter to his sister, in which he admitted his fault, and promised that things would be different when he returned to the States from a short-term mission in

South America. Her reply: "I'll believe it when I see it."

After coming back to the States, but before returning to his hometown, the man decided to splurge and call his sister. This would surely help her understand that a change had taken place in his life. He called about 11:30 p.m., an hour when they both usually watched the Johnny Carson show. But on this, of all nights, the sister had gone to bed early. When she recognized her brother's voice, she was furious. She accused him of intentionally calling at that hour just to disturb her. She also dredged up a list of accusations and old grudges that made him churn inside.

When she finally slammed the receiver, the man dropped to his knees and told the Lord, "If you want me to love her, you're going to have to provide the love because I just don't have enough. I've tried my best and I give up."

He recalls, "God had waited a long time for me to discover that I couldn't do all this by myself." Our friend learned that God loves to transform relationships. He found out that God could transform even this one that he had worked on so hard and botched up so badly.

"Many months have passed since the Lord began to intervene. I still have to remind myself to let the Lord do the loving," says the young man. But there have been changes. The sister goes for walks with her brother now, and the pair are finally learning to confide in one another. He can even share some of the rough spots in his life.

What the Lord did for this anonymous writer, He does every day for countless Christians. Let's consider ways to make his love a reality in daily practice.

Step One

Admit your lack of love. Be honest before God and tell it like it is. He won't be surprised at anything you tell him. Mention names as you pray—the people you can't stand. Confess your lack of love as sin. And while you're praying, if the Lord shows you anything else that blocks his channel, the Holy Spirit, confess that; and turn it out of your life.

Step Two

Thank him for providing the love you need. We have already noticed in Romans 5 that God's love is poured out through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Every Christian receives the Holy Spirit as a free gift when he comes to Christ. And all the love you need is available through the Spirit. God has already provided for your need, so thank him for making available what he demands. The supply of all-conquering love is God's part. Expressing that love is our part.

Step Three

Take God's love by faith. That's exactly how you came to Christ in the first place. You looked at the offer of forgiveness and eternal life, and told the Savior, "I believe. I'll take Christ by faith and claim him for time and eternity."

Love becomes ours the same way. We say to the Lord, "I take the love you have graciously provided. I believe it is mine, no matter what I feel. Put it to work in my world today."

Step Four

Stop, look, and listen for ways you can show love to difficult people. Think of creative ways to compliment those you find it hard to enjoy. Listen with the ears of the heart. You may uncover a clue to an unlovely individual's behavior, if you stay tuned in to that person's spirit. But that kind of listening can only happen when you and I remain open to the Spirit of God. Remember, he is the one who brings God's kind of love to flood tide in our hearts.

Several years ago I heard about the Christian concern a group of people are showing to the widow of Lee Harvey Oswald. Marina Oswald has been the object of much cruelty and scorn since her husband murdered President John F. Kennedy. But these believers went out of their way to show love and kindness. Eventually, the two children of the Oswalds came to Vacation Bible School and received Christ. The Christians continued their witnessing and love to Marina.

One day she asked one of the men, "Why do you show me so much love?" He replied, "There's only one answer. His name is Jesus Christ. I'm basically selfish, and only the Lord is able to turn my thoughts toward anyone except number one!"

Marina was silent for a long time, then she asked, "If I come to your church, will everyone there love me as you do?"

I don't know what that man answered, but I know that her question needs to search us. If someone comes to the youth group, the choir, your Sunday school class, or even drops into a service, what evidence will that person have that we really care?

The only way I know for us to give the Lord a satisfactory answer to this question is for each of us to allow the Spirit of God to flood our lives with his kind of love. When that happens, we will begin to touch the outer limits of revival. ❑

David S. McCarthy is senior pastor of the Portsmouth, N.H., Advent Christian Church.

The Peter Pan in All of Us

Bill O'Connor
Newberg, Oregon

JAMES M. BARRIE'S *Peter Pan*, the story of a magical lost boy in Never Land, though a delightful fantasy, is a tragic tale of protracted childhood. So appealing is the story of the boy who refuses to grow up, however, that it has spawned the classic Disney animation and several lesser imitations, the Mary Martin television and Broadway versions of the 1950s, a morning cartoon show, and the recent film spectacular "Hook." The story has such great appeal simply because there's a little bit of Peter Pan in all of us. We either refuse to grow up, or we struggle to delay the process as long as we can.

Recently a major toy retailer appealed to the Peter Pan in every adult with a campaign that proclaimed, "I don't wanna grow up, I'm a Toys-R-Us kid." We all knew what they were talking about, for down deep in our hearts we love toys as much as our children do. Sometimes the toys we buy are for ourselves rather than the kids. We know that it's true: The difference between men and boys is often little more than the price of their toys.

The goal is maturity

Refusing to grow up isn't all bad. There are lots of things about childhood worth keeping in adulthood. For example, we should never lose our sense of curiosity or adventure. And we certainly ought to hold on to our simple faith in God.

It's at that very point, of course, that the difficulty presents itself. God wants us to mature even while we keep our childlike trust in him. Our heavenly Father wants us to grow up into the likeness of our elder brother, Jesus Christ.

Several years ago I heard someone say that "you're young only once, but you can remain immature indefinitely." That's what happens to far too many believers—they pass the point of spiritual infancy and childhood, but they fail to become mature. It was to such persons that the author of the letter to the Hebrews referred when he wrote, "*though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!*" (Hebrews 5:12, NIV).

The Bible has much to say about overcoming our tendencies to emulate Peter Pan so that we may grow up to be more and more like Jesus. The goal of Christian growth is that "*we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ*" (Ephesians 4:13, NIV). We are to keep on following the Lord until that goal has been fully attained. The prayer of Paul's companion Epaphras for the Colossian believers represents God's desire for each of us: "*that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured*" (Colossians 4:12, NIV).

What maturity means

Why is it that we Christians are reluctant to grow up? Perhaps the reasons are the same as those of a little child who is afraid to leave infancy behind.

Leaving childhood and entering adulthood means a loss of innocence. We have to face a lot of realities as grownups that we can overlook as children. The moment those realities begin to impinge on our consciousness we want to turn the other way. One of the reasons the lost boys of Never Land wished to stay boys was that "all adults are pirates." There are Christian realities that must likewise

be faced head on as we grow. Sometimes those realities are easier to avoid than to meet.

Becoming mature means having an increased awareness of the world around us, which means knowing more about people and their needs. Staying immature means we can ignore those needs and go on enjoying ourselves by taking care of our own wants. It's easier for some Christians to be ministered to than to minister to others.

Growing up always means additional responsibility. When you're little, Dad and Mom take care of lots of things for you. When you get bigger you have to start taking care of those things for yourself. Most children try to get their parents to go on meeting some of those needs in their lives for as long as possible. Christians do the same when they ask their pastor or church school teacher to do for them what they should be doing for themselves. The oft heard complaint that "I'm not getting fed in this church," for instance, is a Christian copout. Mature believers ought to be feeding themselves everyday, not expecting their pastor to prepare them a feast once or twice a week.

There's no sadder spiritual condition than an adult believer who has never grown up in Christ.

Being an adult means you have to start taking care of not only your own needs but the needs of others. Like Mom and Dad when you were young, there will always be someone within your sphere of influence who will be younger and need your care. There comes a point in life where we're all supposed to stop being children and start being parents. That responsibility is so daunting to some that they avoid it by every possible means.

Behind the desire to hang on to childhood, and perhaps the strongest reason for avoiding maturity, is the fact that it is always more fun to play than to work. Childhood can be an endless series of adventures and experiences that are fun, exciting, and often geared to our wants and needs. Adulthood appears to be an endless string of obligations and responsibilities which are less than fun and frequently tedious and boring. When faced with a decision between the two, the choice is easy.

To be like Jesus

Of course, in real life, we have little choice about growing up. It happens to us whether we like it or not. The years come and go even when we ignore them. There's no sadder sight than a thirty-year-old adult who still acts like Peter Pan. And there's no sadder spiritual condition than an adult believer who has never grown up in Christ.

People who refuse to become mature still act like children. That's the answer to so much that goes on in the church that falls short of honoring Christ. It's as natural as breathing: children will act like children. And childish behavior leads to childish reaction. The church is no more grown up than the people who sit in the pews each week.

Yes, there's a little bit of Peter Pan in each of us; there's a whole lot of Peter in some of us. But the Bible tells us that our goal isn't to be like Peter, it's to be like Jesus. We need to grow up. We can't go on being a spiritual Toys-R-Us kid forever.

Growth as a believer is similar to growth as a human. If we are to leave childhood and progress toward maturity, we will need a proper diet. The Christian's food is the Word of God. A second requisite is good exercise. That's the believer's prayer life. A third need is a proper education. The church is doing its best to teach, the question is whether we're doing our best to learn. Yet another need is an exposure to positive peer relationships. We grow as believers by knowing and spending time with other believers who have progressed a little further than ourselves.

The major factor in the growth process is exposure to life itself. We grow by living from one day to the next; by living through one day after another. This old world is the crucible in which growth into Christlikeness takes place. It is as we learn to think and act like Christ in the real situations of day-to-day living that we become increasingly mature.

The final factor is time. The premise of the movie "Hook" is that even Peter Pan grew up. He didn't want to. He avoided it for many years. But he grew up anyway. It happened the moment he made the decision that there was something better in adulthood than he could find in childhood.

There is something better in Christian maturity than in spiritual immaturity, and that something is a vital, personal relationship with the Lord Jesus himself. Let's stop being replicas of Peter and start becoming living representations of Jesus. Let's grow up. "*Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything*" (James 1:4, NIV). ❑

Bill O'Connor is a veteran pastor and freelance writer who lives in Newberg, Oregon.

Reflecting God's Image Through A Passion for People

Alice Brown
Rochester, N.H.

JESUS had a passion for people. Passion, according to Webster's dictionary, is "an intense emotion compelling action." John 3:16 says, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whosoever believes on him shall not perish, but have eternal life." God loved us so much that he was compelled to send Jesus to pay the penalty for our sins so that we can have a relationship with him. Jesus loved us so much that he willingly gave his life for us.

Jesus saw the crowds and had compassion for them. He felt their hurts and sorrows, disappointments and insecurities, sicknesses and weaknesses. He understood their emotional hurts and spiritual needs. He cared deeply and reached out to them in love. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, comforted the grieving, encouraged the hurting, delivered the oppressed, and saved the lost. He expressed God's love to a hurting world by meeting the needs of the people all around him.

We are created in God's image so that we can have a relationship with God, think his thoughts, feel his feelings, and do his work. Christ revealed God's love for us by giving his life for us. We reveal Christ's love and compassion for the world by giving ourselves to others in love and sharing the good news of God's love for them.

Ministering to need

God desires that we minister as Jesus did to the many hurting people around us—the lonely, the sick and disabled, the abused, the oppressed, the addicted, the unemployed and underemployed, the elderly, the poor, and the lost. As we visit and pray for the sick, provide food, clothes, and shelter for the poor and needy, minister to the disabled and elderly, befriend the lonely, love the unloved, and share the good news of Christ's love with the lost and hurting, we reflect God's love and compassion to the world. Each one of us, as believers, has a responsibility before God to minister to hurting people around us.

Think about your neighbors and friends. Think about the needs in your community. How are you, individually and as a church, reflecting Christ's love to them in ways that they can see and feel? Think creatively. How can you share a "cup of cold water" with someone in need so that they can see Jesus in you and desire to know him as you do?

Here are some ideas. I'm sure you can think of many more:

- Offer a listening ear.
- Provide food, clothing, or shelter to those in need.
- Visit the elderly and shut-ins; provide meals and transportation for them, and helping in other ways.
- Offer quality day care for working parents.
- Provide quality children and youth programs that teach biblical morals and values.
- Provide respite care for those caring for the sick and disabled.
- Offer a mothers-day-out for mothers of preschoolers.
- Develop a small group or care group ministry in your church for fellowship and building healthy relationships.
- Offer biblical counseling to deal with people's spiritual and emotional needs or referring people to Christian counselors.
- Provide Christ-centered support and recovery groups in your church such as a marriage builders group, a cancer support group, a Christ-centered twelve step recovery group, a grief and loss support group, a women's support group, a divorce recovery group, a single-parent group, or a home-schoolers group.
- Provide safe houses for battered women and children.
- Support your local crisis pregnancy center.
- Be there for people as they go through the welfare or court system.
- Offer workshops and seminars for the community on topics like

parenting, money management, and marriage enrichment.

Conclusion: Look for a need in your community. Ask God to show you how you as an individual or as a church can meet that need. People are more open to accept God's love as their needs are met through people who care, people like you who reach out to them in love. ❑

Rev. Alice Brown is director of Emmanuel Counseling Center at Emmanuel Advent Christian Church in Rochester, New Hampshire. She is a former missionary to the Philippines with Advent Christian World Missions. She enjoys reading mysteries and Christian novels and is learning American Sign Language. From the 1995 WHFMS Program Kit.

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carried on in an unusual way, or because it touches people at an emotional level. Nor can we judge an entire movement just because of "errors in judgment, and some delusions of Satan intermixed with the work." Movements, like people, are in process. Even the most mature Christian has blind spots and areas of sinful behavior to wrestle with. Why should we expect perfection in our churches and organizations?

So how should we judge a movement or a ministry? How should we evaluate the special services held in many local congregations? Edwards focuses on 1 John 4 and from that passage suggests that an authentic work of God's Spirit will be marked by several things: People will grow in their love and esteem for Jesus Christ. God's kingdom will be extended and Satan's work will suffer. People will be convicted by the truth and develop a passion to read, study, and live by the teaching of Holy Scripture. And people will practice love for each other. That last mark is especially important in Edwards' view because the apostle John mentions it several times in chapter four. "If the spirit that is at work among a people," according to Edwards, "operates as a spirit of love to God and man, 'tis a sure sign that 'tis the Spirit of God."

Through his exposition of scripture, Jonathan Edwards not only focused attention on the marks of spiritual revival, he argued powerfully that the preaching of George Whitefield and others were part of an authentic work prompted by the Holy Spirit. And he urged his readers to guard against spiritual pride and participate with humility and "entire dependence on our Lord Jesus Christ." If Jonathan Edwards were alive today, I think he would view the many concerts of prayer, the student revivals on college campuses, and the stadium rallies sponsored by Promise Keepers as signs of authentic spiritual awakening. And I think he would counsel us to participate with a spirit of humility and total dependence upon Jesus Christ. ❑

Mission Prayer Partnership

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A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

August

1 Praise God that **Russell and Noelle Carle** have started their ministry in the metropolitan area of Auckland, New Zealand.

2 Pray that God will give **Russell and Noelle** wisdom as they develop strategy for planting an Advent Christian church in Auckland and work to strengthen an existing congregation in the Takanini suburb.

3 Praise God for the dramatic growth that Advent Christian congregations in **China** have experienced.

4 Pray that all Christians in **China** will sense God's strength as they proclaim the gospel in the face of government opposition.

5 Praise God for the opportunities that Asia/Pacific Area Director **George Teshera** is having to work with national conference leaders during his overseas trips.

6 Pray that God will bring continued comfort to **Beulah Devasahayam** and her family in the loss of her husband, Malaysian national missionary **Lucus Devasahayam**.

7 Pray that India missionaries **Bill and Celia Jewell**, and **Tim and Ruth Fox** will soon be granted visas to begin their work in the Kodaikanal area.

8 Pray that God will give the **Foxes and Jewells** patience and strength as they wait for the door to service in India to be opened.

9 Praise God for the many lives touched for Christ in India by our three retiring Advent Christian missionaries: **Barbara White**, **Beryl Joy Hollis**, and **Marion Damon**.

10 Pray that God will provide Marion, Beryl Joy, and Barbara a **safe journey home** next month as they return from India for the final time.

11 Praise God for the opportunities that **Steven and Ann Lay** had to communicate the work of Advent Christian missions in Japan while they were home on furlough.

12 Pray that the Lord will provide **strength and wisdom** for Steve and Ann as they prepare to return to Japan next month for another term of service.

13 Praise God that **Karen Rigney** and **Margaret Helms** have had a variety of teaching and ministry opportunities in Japan.

14 Pray that as people in the Japanese city of **Kobe** continue to rebuild after the devastating earthquake, Japanese Christians in that area will have many opportunities to communicate the gospel.

15 Praise God for the effective administrative leadership that **Warren Prestidge** is providing at Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

16 Pray that God will give Philippines missionary **David Vignali** strength and encouragement as he works in a variety of ways to strengthen the work of the mission.

17 Praise God that several Advent Christian congregations have sent **short-term mission** teams to a variety of locations this summer.

18 Pray that God will richly bless the summer ministry program that **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** are providing in the inner city of Memphis, Tennessee.

19 Praise God for the growing Advent Christian congregation that Liberian Advent Christian pastor **Amos Gbaa** is planting in Ghana.

20 Pray that God will provide strength and protection for Advent Christians in war-torn **Liberia**.

21 Praise God that Advent Christian congregations in **Nigeria** continue to reach people for Jesus Christ.

22 Pray that God will provide wisdom and direction for Nigerian nationals **Aloysius and Grace Okon** as they continue to establish an Advent Christian congregation among African nationals in Charlotte.

23 Praise God that many Advent Christian congregations are reporting their best **Penny Crusade** ever.

24 Pray that God will provide financially for all Advent Christian **denominational work** including the dramatic expansion of the Advent Christian mission force.

25 Praise God that several Advent Christian congregations and conferences have had successful **mission conferences** during the spring and summer of 1995.

26 Pray for those actively involved in planning and preparation for next year's Advent Christian General Conference **triennial session** to be held in Tampa, Florida.

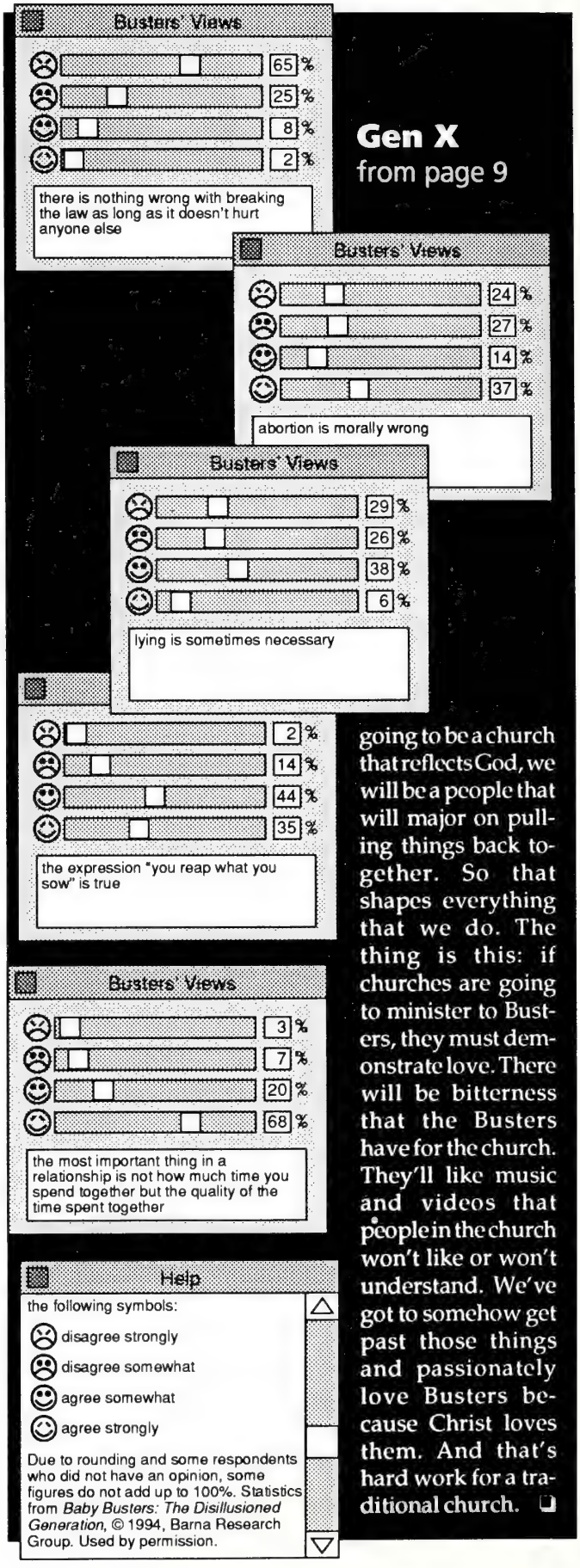
27 Praise God for the dedicated service that the **General Conference staff** in Charlotte and the **regional superintendents** are providing to Advent Christian congregations.

28 Pray that God will bless the ministry of **Dr. David A. Dean** as he directs the Center for Advent Christian Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in S. Hamilton, Mass.

29 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** are having as the pastoral family for the Advent Christian congregation in El Florido, Mexico.

30 Pray that God will prepare Advent Christian **college and university students** to face academic and spiritual challenges during the upcoming fall semester.

31 Pray that God will provide **pastoral leadership** for a number of Advent Christian congregations presently without pastoral leadership.



Gen X
from page 9

going to be a church that reflects God, we will be a people that will major on pulling things back together. So that shapes everything that we do. The thing is this: if churches are going to minister to Busters, they must demonstrate love. There will be bitterness that the Busters have for the church. They'll like music and videos that people in the church won't like or won't understand. We've got to somehow get past those things and passionately love Busters because Christ loves them. And that's hard work for a traditional church. ❑

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

Two assumptions must obtain to make the marriage of truth and tolerance work. First, it must be assumed that truth exists and that it is worth preserving and passing on to future generations. And second, tolerance needs to be understood not as an end but as a means, a crucial ingredient in the preservation and cultivation of truth. Under such assumptions tolerance is not something we celebrate but something that we acknowledge as a necessity in a fallen world. What we celebrate, instead, is the truth. It is truth we honor, it is truth we cherish, and it is truth on which we stake our lives.

—S.D. Gaede in *When Tolerance is No Virtue*

Suffering isn't fatal. Our eternal destiny isn't riding on our circumstances or on what people do or say. Our security is based on our Lord's acceptance and his word.

—David Roper

The television commercial has oriented business away from making products of value and toward making consumers feel valuable, which means that the business of business has now become pseudo-therapy.

—Neil Postman in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*

Indeed, there seems to be a growing agreement among all citizens on the nature of our problems as a society. . . It is increasingly obvious that first, we cannot build an orderly society when there is disorder in our souls; second, a political culture cannot survive apart from a moral culture that nourishes the values that made it possible; and third, these values are shaped in stable, two-parent families where children are initiated into the civilized traditions of the human race.

—Cal Thomas

Some want to live within sight of a tall and stately steeple, but I want to live next door to hell and rescue hopeless people.

—Brian Barlow

Every Christian is a disciple. The mission of the church and the goal of evangelism is to make disciples. Disciples are those people who believe, those whose faith motivates them to obey all Jesus commanded.

—John MacArthur in *The Gospel According to Jesus*

If the happiness we seek includes victory over human limitations, then it cannot be carried out by ourselves or any other human being. We all share the same problems. We simply cannot draw up such a power from within us. Only what transcends us can transform us.

—Rebecca Pippert in *Hope Has its Reasons*

All real education is the architecture of the soul.

—William Bennett

I believe prayer is key to the success of any congregation being the church God has called it to be... Please do not see this as a gimmick to get God to act on our behalf. We cannot pray thinking that our prayers are the power. We must pray, humbling ourselves before God almighty, realizing that the power of prayer is his power.

—Pastor Tim Setzer, Blessed Hope Advent Christian Church, Waterville, Maine

In Other Words

Human rights are not a privilege conferred by government. They are every human being's entitlement by virtue of his humanity. The right to life does not depend and must not be declared to be contingent, on the pleasure of anyone else, not even a parent or a sovereign. The Constitutional Court of the Federal Republic of Germany recently ruled that "the unborn child is entitled to the right to life independently of acceptance by its mother; this is an elementary and inalienable right that emanates from the dignity of the human being." Americans may feel justly proud that Germany in 1993 was able to recognize the sanctity of human life. You must weep that your own government, at present, seems blind to this truth.

—Mother Teresa in an amicus brief filed before the United States Supreme Court

Great from page 11

are discipling thousands of believers. This faithful pastor declared, "My grandfather was an Advent Christian. My father was an Advent Christian. I'm an Advent Christian, and my children and many others will be Advent Christian." This is a living demonstration of Great Commission discipleship. ❑

Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
Box 17, Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Marion Damon (March 27)
Box 17, Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA
Ph. 011-91-04-542-40713

Beryl Joy Hollis (December 16)
American Advent Mission
Velacheri, Madras 600 042
INDIA

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Warren Prestidge
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
145 S. Calumet Ave.
Aurora, IL 60506

Karen Rigney (June 5)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-794-62-8744

Floyd and Musa Powers
(October 8 and February 28)
15-3 1 Chome Higashi Fujie
Akashi Shi, Hyogoken 673
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-078-925-3416

Margaret Helms (September 18)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
Bududuram Refugee Camp
National Mobilization Program
Box 46
Accra, GHANA

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

Liberia and China
Contact Missions Office for addresses

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devasahayam
Beulah Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Rev. T. and Ruth Devairakkam
33, Jalan Intan 4/1
Taman Intan,
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Mexico

Carlos Quintero
387 W. Poppyfields Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
(818) 791-2447

Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Carlos Quintero

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Vice-president
Harold Patterson; World Missions
Millie Griswold; Resource Development

P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

Russell Giasson; Services
Robert Mayer; Publications
Brent Carpenter; Church Relations

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Advent Christian
WITNESS

September 1995

MAKING DISCIPLES



Responding to the Great Commission

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MAKING DISCIPLES

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What is the future for the Advent Christian Church? David Ross suggests that it lies in prioritizing our Lord's Command to make disciples.

Great Commission Families 6

Can your family communicate Jesus' love to others and have fun doing it at the same time? Yes, according to Cheryl Ewings. She looks at what happens when families make the Great Commission their priority.

LOST: The Most Forgotten Word in Christianity 8

Are people lost apart from Jesus Christ? In Harold Patterson's view, the Scriptures clearly teach that the answer is "yes." Despite the growth of religious and cultural pluralism, Christians must not shrink from what the Bible teaches about the fate of those who do not respond to the Gospel.

A Tribute to My Father 15

"We all have standards for greatness and we all have individuals that we place in that category," according to Tim Setzer. "On the top of my list is Rev. Frederick Banks Setzer Sr."

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On the Cover

Fulfilling our Lord's Great Commission means meeting people at their level of spiritual need. Three articles in this issue explore this important biblical principle.

photo by Jim Whitmer Photography

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Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria



ONE SMALL STEP FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Virginia, is not only located in one of the most beautiful sections of the eastern United States, it's home to what many Americans perceive as one of the best institutions of higher learning in the nation—the University of Virginia. Established in the early 1800s, the university's founding was driven by the third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson.

Jefferson's passion for establishing the university flowed from two deep personal convictions. He wanted an institution that would "give fair play to the cultivation of reason." And he was alarmed by what he saw as the ambition of the Presbyterian Calvinists who although small in number had a dramatic influence on American higher education in the first half of the nineteenth century. But despite Jefferson's denial of a personal God and his commitment to science and reason, he did believe that all religious groups should have the freedom to propagate their own views.

How ironic that Jefferson's university would be the focal point for perhaps the most important religious freedom case of the 1990s.

How ironic that 175 years later, Jefferson's university would be the focal point for perhaps the most important religious freedom case of the 1990s. The University of Virginia requires students to pay a mandatory student activity fee each year at registration. The fees are used for a variety of activities, including funding for 118 student groups and a variety of independent student-edited newspapers. The Muslim Student Association and the Jewish Law Students Association were two of the student groups who received money from the university for their activities.

But when two UVA students, Roger Rosenberger and Robert Prince, asked for just over $5,000 from a UVA fund supported by student activity fees for their Christian oriented publication, *Wide Awake*, the university denied their request because in their view, the publication constituted a "religious" activity. (The Jewish and Muslim associations were classified by the university as "cultural activities.")

Fortunately, Rosenberger and Prince didn't take "no" for an answer and took the matter to court—all the way to the Supreme Court of the United States. And in a 5-4 ruling, the Court ruled that government neutrality toward religion does not require government institutions like the University of Virginia to discriminate against religious viewpoints. Justice Anthony Kennedy said in his majority opinion that "the guarantee of neutrality is respected, not offended when the government, following neutral criteria and even-handed policies, extends benefits to recipients whose ideologies and viewpoints, including religious ones, are broad and diverse."

In other words, religious viewpoints cannot be discriminated against by appealing to the separation of church and state. Since 1947, that notion has been interpreted by many within government and the legal profession to mean the exclusion of religion from public life. Hopefully, this decision is a first step away from that twisted understanding of the First Amendment. But don't celebrate too much. Remember that four justices—David Souter, Ruth Ginsburg, Steven Breyer, and John Paul Stevens—voted for the idea that government neutrality requires discrimination against religious viewpoints. Hostility toward religious freedom is still powerful and its preservation requires constant attention. Unless the guarantee of religious freedom is strengthened within the next two decades, the United States faces a dark future. ❑

Checking the Baggage,

The true goal is not more missionaries, less closed churches, more new churches planted, better success raising budgets for ministry, or even more souls saved. Rather, the true goal is obedience to and fulfillment of the Great Commission of our Lord.

David E. Ross
Charlotte, N.C.

PERHAPS the week stands out in my memory because my suitcase never made the journey with me, for some reason known only to the airline. Upon boarding the airplane that week in late September of 1986, I checked my suitcase for the destination in Illinois, and carried with me only a clipboard, note-pad, and pen. When the baggage never arrived, I felt somewhat under-equipped for a week of meetings intended to strategize the future course of our denomination. Going into those sessions, at least symbolically almost empty-handed and divested of baggage, might not have been such a bad idea. (Lest you worry, my hosts for the week graciously loaned me a few toiletry items. I bought a few other survival basics at a discount store, and my suitcase arrived home a few days later, shortly after I did.)



Throughout 1984 and 1985, a series of "Think-Tanks" had been conducted throughout the various conferences and regions of the Advent Christian Church, wherein literally hundreds of people addressed basic issues such as, "Why is our denomination no longer growing?" "What are we doing wrong?" and "What can we do to fix it?" As you can imagine, there was no lack of opinion expressed! Recording secretaries from those sessions generated reams of notes, which were collected and presented to the denomination's Executive Council. That group was then faced with the question, "How do you sort through a mountain of knowledgeable, grass-roots analysis and advice, then formulate it into a focused plan for the future?"

An entire evening session of the Council's deliberations in July of 1986 was devoted to prayer, seeking the wisdom of God for the next step. From that time on their knees, emerged the appointment of a six-member Long Range Strategy Committee, challenged to chart a course based upon the heart-cry of the people, and reflective of a vision from the Lord. No small assignment!

How do we begin?

So, that is why six individuals, coincidentally representative of all five regions, came together in Illinois for a few strategic days in September of 1986. I sensed a tremendous spirit of anticipation and challenge as we assembled to pray and seek God's direction with open minds (and in my case at least, nearly empty hands). The reminder that many other Advent Christians were also upholding us in prayer was greatly reassuring.

That first day was largely devoted to deciding where to begin. Dr. Louia Gransee, the group's chairman, led us through a process of sorting through the various options. It seemed a bit like trying to decide how best to find your way back to the right trail, the trail to your destination, once you've gotten distracted, side-tracked, disoriented, and then admittedly lost in the woods.

It gradually became evident to us that the true goal was not any of our frequent targets—more missionaries, less closed churches, more new churches planted, better success raising budgets for ministry, or even more souls saved. Rather, the true goal was obedience to and fulfillment of the Great Commission of our Lord. And it appeared that the key to facilitating this goal was not better (or better supported) denominational programs, but *healthy local churches*—churches which could help believers be discipled and make disciples, as we were commanded in Matt. 28:18-20.

Day two of those meetings was one of the most enjoyable days of my life. It was spent not fixating on what was wrong, but imagining what could

Charting the Course

be right. What would a healthy local church look like? We delighted in dreaming, describing the ideal, vibrant congregation in elaborate detail.

Day three was devoted to asking, "O.K., we know what a healthy church should look like; now, how do we get there?" You can imagine the theories which began to fly from the fertile minds in that room! A well-timed, Spirit-filled, prayerful pause brought the group to a remarkable consensus—a healthy local church is not only a *producer* of disciple-makers, it is a *product* of conscientious disciple-making.

No, that statement is not double talk. It's not the same as asking, "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" (Most creationists aren't stumped by that one anyway.) There really *is* an entry point to this process, and it's this: By prioritizing disciple-making, the local church will begin to truly fulfill the Great Commission. As the Great Commission is fulfilled, disciples will both grow spiritually and multiply, causing the congregation's worship, stewardship, prayer, evangelism, and other components of ministry to become progressively healthier. The by-products then realized naturally (but intentionally) will be growth in missions, church planting, impact upon society, and many other positive dynamics. Wow! There really is a workable plan! A "Master plan," you might call it.

A renewed disciple-making vision

We went home from those sessions with renewed vision and optimism, and to assignments in developmental reading, writing, and practical application (and in my case, to a fresh set of clothes).

Other group sessions ensued, a denominational convention's delegate vote in 1987 strongly affirmed the strategic direction being charted, and field testing began on discipling methods among perhaps the church's most forgotten, but most responsive constituency—college students on various campuses. The significant by-product of this initial field test, already in evidence, is not only a vibrant Student Ministries network, currently numbering over 700 individuals, which is breathing new life and hope into our denomination, but a cadre of young people committed to local church ministry who *already know by personal experience* what it means to be discipled and to make disciples.

A series of Advent Christian leadership conferences in recent years have given many of our pastors and church leaders opportunity to seriously consider the practical application of our Great Commission mandate. Our partnering with Dr. Dann Spader of Sonlife Ministries in 1992 helped us avoid "reinventing the wheel," as we discovered that his considerable study and resultant ministry focus for nearly a decade had led him to develop and field test certain tools and processes for encouraging local churches to prioritize a disciple-making focus and to practically implement this approach to ministry. God has used Dann as a helpful coach to us, and as an inspiration to help fan the flame of "Great Commission passion" among our people.

What could be a more appropriate emphasis for a church that has at the heart of its historic message (and its name) the biblical truth that Jesus is coming again? In my current responsibilities as a denominational administrator, I am privileged to circulate extensively among our local churches. And do you know what? This spark of Great Commission focus, which prayerfully is growing daily toward becoming a passion, is beginning to make a difference. What a future there may be for the Advent Christian Church in these last days of human history, if we can only become obsessed with obedience to Christ's Great commission! I hope that you can't wait! The best place to start is on your knees. ❑

The key is not better denominational programs, but *healthy local churches*—churches which can help believers be discipled and make disciples, as we were commanded in Matthew 28.

David E. Ross is Executive Vice president of the Advent Christian General Conference. If you would like to explore these themes more, Dave suggests two good books: *The Everyday Commission* by Dann Spader, and *Personal Disciple-making* by Christopher Adsit. Both are available through Venture Bookstore by calling 1-800-676-0694. From Canada, call 704/545-6161 and reverse the charges.



Great Commission Families

If you've been a Christian for more than four years, it's likely that you do not have many non-Christian friends. Want an exciting challenge?

Cheryl Ewings
Wheaton, Ill.

AS THE MOTHER of three sons, most of my time in spring months is spent at baseball games. Last year we had a Christian coach who impressed me with the incredible love he and his family showed to our team. That love was also expressed to the families of the team members. What Jack and Sue did was not difficult, but God's fingerprints were all over their lives. Their whole family attended every game and Sue made sure to bring supplies of gourmet coffee and hot chocolate for everyone for those nippy early spring games. Sue showed Jesus' servant heart by making it available to every fan that attended our games, even the opposing team! Now that is Jesus-style love! Sue is the home-schooling mother of four with a baseball coach for a husband. She really didn't need another thing to do, but she extended Jesus' love through this small service.

Sue also brought a small Kodak camera to every game and took a few pictures. She didn't spend hours doing it, but she intentionally tried to get the great moments in the boys' baseball careers.

At the end of the season, Sue and Jack organized a team picnic to celebrate. During a ceremony, each boy on the team received a small trophy with their name, the team name, and the year engraved on it. They also received a folder with their team stats that Jack had been keeping on his home computer. Sue included the photos so each boy had three or four pictures of the season's memorable moments.

This couple modeled Jesus' love and care to the boys and their families in a way that I've rarely seen. If I were a non-Christian parent on the team, I'd be incredibly curious about what Jack and Sue's life motivation was. They modeled Jesus' love to the team.

Making disciples by showing Jesus' love

Is your family struggling with priorities and purposeful living? Most Christian families do. I'm sure you've heard the adage that says if you fail to

plan, you plan to fail. In churches across North America there are families that fail to plan to reach their neighbors for Christ. Therefore, they haven't had much impact for Christ in their neighborhoods, schools, or communities.

Recently I've discovered several Christian families like Jack and Sue's, who have had incredible impact by reaching others for Jesus Christ. What is the difference? They have made Jesus' "Great Commission" the priority for their family. This is Great Commission living as Jesus commanded!

When Jesus left the earth, he commissioned his disciples to finish what he had begun. This Commission was to be an integral part of their everyday lives and not just reserved for Sundays. And that Commission is for us today. "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them. . . and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:18-20).

There are families across America that have adopted Jesus' Commission as their own. They are spending their lives intentionally reaching their neighbors and peers for Jesus Christ on an everyday basis. How can your family make the Great Commission of Jesus Christ an everyday part of their life?

Being a friend to sinners

Another family—Tom, Pam, and their three girls—moved into a new suburban neighborhood with the intention of reaching their neighborhood for Christ. There are 95 homes in their subdivision that they pray for as a family on a regular basis. Each family moved in at the same time, so Tom and Pam became a resource for typical new house needs, such as landscaping and doctors. Since Tom and Pam attended a large church in the area, they already had a resource of names and professions that they could provide to their neighbors. Tom made himself available every Monday night to watch football with the neighborhood guys. He also joined a neighborhood softball team in order to build intentional relationships with his peers.

Recently I've discovered several Christian families who have had incredible impact by reaching others for Jesus Christ. What is the difference? They have made Jesus' "Great Commission" the priority for their family.

Pam spent months developing relationships with women in the neighborhood who are stay-at-home moms. She now leads a Bible study with five moms, as they look into the Bible to study the life of Christ. Tom and Pam's preteen girls have made it their goal to invite every one of their friends to the outreaches sponsored by their church. Tom is grateful for the partnership from his church as he spends time reaching his neighbors for Jesus Christ.

Their church comes alongside of their family's efforts by sponsoring some specially designed outreach events for the community that are relevant and exciting. In August, their church sponsors a Kid's Day with clowns, tumbling acts, games, and lots of fun for area-wide children to attend. In December, they sponsor a contemporary Christmas drama that is presented at the church. Tom and Sue make their Christmas plans based on the drama schedule, inviting neighbors in for an open house after the performance with special Christmas music and desserts. It has given them a credible platform to build bridges to discuss the message of the play on a deeper level with their neighbors.

After five years of living in this subdivision, Tom and Sue have seen five neighbors accept Christ and many, many others having had the seed of the gospel sown into their lives. They have committed their family to reaching their neighbors for Christ in an intentional fashion. They're not doing it alone since they have a church with the same heartbeat for the Great Commission standing behind them to partner with them in reaching their world.

Here's one more example of Great Commission living. A pastor in Southern California realized that he played golf every week with a group of Christians. To become more Great Commission minded, he now golfs only with "pre-believers," as he calls them. Recently, one of his golfing partners, a man he has been praying for, accepted Christ. His church has developed a major outreach activity of a men's golf outing every fall. Many men have been saved through this new program in his church because they've intentionally tried to make it attractive to pre-Christian men.

Jesus was well known for being a "friend of sinners." In fact, he was often criticized by the Pharisees because he often fraternized with tax collectors and sinners. If you've been a Christian for more than four years, it's likely that you do not have many non-Christian friends. Want an exciting challenge? Build friendships with your neighbors and associates. Make it your commitment to have your family become known as a friend of sinners, like Jesus, by putting the Great Commission as the focus and priority of your family life in the coming months and years. ❑

Cheryl Ewings serves on the staff of Sonlife ministries in Elburn, Ill. Her articles on families have been published in a variety of Christian magazines.

LOST

The Most Forgotten Word in Christianity

Harold Patterson
Charlotte, N.C.

HAVE WE LOST some important words from our evangelical vocabulary? Some think so. According to Ted Ward "On one side 'lost,' 'saved,' and 'hell' have disappeared from our vocabulary. On the other side 'fulfillment' and 'enjoyment' have replaced 'commitment' and 'sacrifice.' Ed Dayton, veteran mission executive with World Vision observes that 'over the past few years we have noted a marked change in the kind of language among evangelicals. We wonder whether the shift in the language is a shift in theology, or whether a shift in theology has generated a change in language. When words like 'saved,' 'lost,' 'sacrifice,' and 'commitment' drop out of our vocabulary, their absence alters the way we think. Common Bible language is the glue that holds us together." And Ajith Fernando, Youth for Christ director of Sri Lanka and popular Intervarsity Christian Fellowship speaker, raises the question, "Do we evangelicals preach as much today about the nature of lostness, and what it means to be separated from Christ?"

Think for a moment about one particular word—"lost." Again, in Ed Dayton's words, "There is something very specific and non-pluralistic about 'lost.' It's a terrifying word, especially if loved ones are standing outside the kingdom. It is a word that has driven the mission enterprise for almost 2000 years, but it's just not fashionable anymore. It involves a value judgment, but it doesn't just imply a value judgment—it sounds superior. If God's Word is to be believed, it is superior, not in attitude, but superior in position."

A biblical word

"Lost," after all, is a biblical word. Jesus used it ten times in the gospel. In nine of those instances he referred to those who are apart from God. And the words in Scripture that are translated into our English word "lost" have an even more dreadful meaning in the original text. "Lost" in the Bible refers to grave peril, irreversible ruin, perishing, destruction, and a dread-

When words like 'saved,' 'lost,' 'sacrifice,' and 'commitment' drop out of our vocabulary, their absence alters the way we think.

ful apartness from God. For example, the word translated into the English word "lost" in some of these passages is translated "perish" in John 3:16. Paul amplifies the meaning of lostness without Christ in Ephesians which describes us as "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants and promise, having no hope in God or in this world" (Eph. 2:12 NIV). Those without Christ are lost—lost to God, lost to the purpose and promises of God, lost to an enduring fellowship with others, and lost to a glorious hope.

Are all people lost? That question has been debated throughout the preceding centuries, and is again highly contested in our time. Disturbingly, in a recent survey conducted by TEAM Mission and taken by over 5,000 young people, while 95% considered themselves orthodox in Christian convictions, only 37% believe that people who fail to accept Jesus Christ would be lost. In other words, two-thirds of these young people believe that there is some other way to be saved apart from the gospel of Christ! Is this true? I'm convinced that the only valid answer can be found in the Scriptures. Luke reminds us in Acts that there is "salvation found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12 NIV). The telling words of Jesus who said, "He that believeth on me is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already" and "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Or consider these words from Isaiah, "I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no Savior" (Isaiah 43:11 NIV). "Was it not I, the Lord? And there is no other God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me" (Isaiah 45:21).

Are those who do not hear about Christ lost? We read in the book of Acts as Paul repeats his commission from the Lord, "I am sending you to them to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me" (Acts 26:17-18 NIV). The psalmist would declare, "For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens" (Psalm 96:5 NIV). Paul, writing in Corinthians will say, "Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons" (1 Cor. 10:20 NIV). Yes, humankind is lost. All are lost without Jesus Christ. This is why we send missionaries to those who need to hear.

In a recent survey of Christian young people, two thirds believed that there is some way to be saved apart from the gospel of Christ.

Alarmingly, even in Canada and the United States, the idea that "good people" are somehow going to be saved apart from accepting Jesus Christ has affected some Advent Christians as well. Because we do not believe in everlasting hell, have we drifted to a view that there is no future punishment at all or that only the most depraved of mankind will be destroyed in the lake of fire?

The Bible speaks of a coming punishment that is awesome, certain, and eternal in its effect. We read that "those whose names were not found written in the Book of Life were cast into the lake of fire."

Many people admit that they cannot believe that a good-living relative, neighbor, friend, or co-worker will really face eternal destruction. They are hoping that somehow there is some other way. If this were true then Christ has died in vain and we can save ourselves. But it is not true! Perhaps the only way to bring this fact home is to ask you to say out loud the name of some loved one or friend with the statement that he or she is going to be destroyed in the fires of hell. If you can say that out loud without a sob in your voice and a pain in your heart, something is wrong!

next page

Is the concept of lostness in poor taste?

Another disturbing survey this time among students at evangelical seminaries was the fact that 46% of them believed that to tell non-believers they will be damned to punishment if they do not repent of their sins, was in "poor taste." Would we not tell someone if their house was on fire or that they were in danger of falling into a terrible abyss! Of course we would and yet we have been reluctant to tell people that they are lost without Jesus Christ. This lack of compassion for lost people has also affected our missionary endeavor. For if men can be saved by their good works then there is no need to send missionaries and we are just wasting our time.

Someone once said, "A man only truly believes what motivates him to action." In other words if we do not do something it is because we do not believe it enough to act upon it. Joseph Stalin was quoted as saying, "The death of one man is a tragedy, the death of 10,000 is a statistic." Therefore, he could send thousands to death without much response from the rest of the world.

We may become emotionally upset when someone we know dies or is tragically killed and yet sit in church unmoved when the information that a million people a week are dying without Jesus Christ as their Savior is shared with us. When a child is lost in the woods, dozens, maybe even hundreds, of people may volunteer to search for him. But when millions of lost people are perishing out there, few have been willing to go, find them, and bring them to Christ. Do we really believe that people are lost?

If so, we need to, in the words of Clarence Jones, co-founder of Mission to the Andes, "Use every means available to us today to reach a lost world that desperately needs Christ."

Many people cannot believe that a good-living relative, neighbor, or friend will face eternal destruction. They are hoping that there is some other way. If this were true then Christ has died in vain and we can save ourselves.

Do we have a burden for lost people?

We need a revival that produces a deep burden for the winning of men and women who are lost and facing God's judgment. Can it no longer be said of us that "knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Billy Graham tells a story of an Englishman who was sent to the gallows and at the scaffold was cautioned by the chaplain about the wrath to come unless he repented. The convict told the chaplain, "If I believed the way you believed, I would crawl across England on broken glass to warn people." And yet it becomes a real effort for many of us to drive our cars down the street just to invite somebody to church never mind to ask them to take Christ as their Savior. Lord give us a vision for what it means to be lost and a burden for lost people!

I have often been asked, how does one get a burden for lost people? My answer comes from the advice of a late minister friend who once said to me, "You do not automatically get a burden for souls when you are saved. You have to ask for it and realize that when it comes, it will hurt!" I have found this to be true! And yet it is needed if we are to grow as a people and carry out the Great Commission.

A burden for the lost certainly involves praying for them. There are some among us who question the legitimacy of praying for the salvation of lost people. Have they missed the prophecy of Isaiah 53:12 where it is said of Jesus, "For he bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Or when Jesus said to Peter, "Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." Some, too, must have missed the great burden of the apostle Paul for his lost countrymen when he would write in Romans 10, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." Such a spirit was revealed also in the life of John Knox who would pray, "Give me Scotland or I die." Oh, that we might have a great burden to pray earnestly for lost people to be saved!"

Jesus said that "I have come to seek and to save those that were lost." He can and wants to save you today. Oh, my friend, experience the joy of being found and saved by Christ Jesus! Make your decision for Christ today! ❑

A graduate of Berkshire Christian College, Rev. Harold Patterson has pastored several Advent Christian congregations and currently serves as Director of World Missions for the Advent Christian General Conference.

You do not automatically get a burden for souls when you are saved. You have to ask for it and realize that when it comes, it will hurt!

HEARING GOD'S VOICE

in a Nursing Home

Fern Smith
Lewiston, Idaho

THE DOORS CLOSED behind me. I braced myself again for the pungent odor that would burn my nostrils. It was a combination of cleaning agents, strong urine, cooking food, and traces of Lysol spray. There in the front entry, listless faces stared at me from bodies behind walkers, in wheelchairs, and sunken couches. Except for a few, they remained expressionless as I said, "Good morning," and hurried on. I had an agenda. I came to the Countryside Nursing Home to lift up and encourage women I had been visiting on a regular basis.

As I made my way around several yellow "Wet Floor" signs, I became aware of short, labored breathing coming from the room on my right. I hesitated before cautiously looking around the doorway. The elevated bed held a fragile form lying there with an oxygen mask tight to her face. She glanced at me and weakly motioned. I reluctantly stepped in and went to her bedside. I asked if there was anything I could do for her. She nodded and again motioned me to lean down, come closer. She slowly lifted the edge of her oxygen mask and with great effort in a barely audible voice said, "I – want – to share – the joy – of the – Lord – with you. – I rejoice – in his goodness – and thank – him from whom – all – blessings flow." A slight smile crossed her face and she closed her eyes, exhausted. I was stunned!

I stood there staring at her. Tears welled in my eyes. Had my smugness been shattered by a suffering saint? I had come to perform "my" ministry. After all, was it not the goodness in my heart that brought me here faithfully, week after week?

God lovingly interrupted my good intentions because I had begun to claim glory for myself. He knew when that happened I could no longer be a channel for his love. He spoke to me through the trembling voice of a helpless little lady. I had entered her room sure, full of me. I left her room broken, full of God.

The experience I have just shared happened many years ago. I have never forgotten his lesson to beware of "self" and pride in ministry. Today, I continue to remember as I care for cancer patients who are in the process of dying. I pay tribute to these dear men and women for the valuable lessons they teach me about the process of living.

Quietly they teach me

In this very room prevails an awesome respect for life and the certainty of death:

I look into eyes of quiet resolve and learn all life is terminal.

I touch open hands releasing life's dreams and learn life is not fair.

I see self-sufficiency relinquished and learn we really do need each other.

I hear only a few words, softly spoken, and learn the importance of listening.

I notice the absence of material values and learn relationship is what really counts.

I recognize gradual retreating within and learn separation is imminent.

I observe courage without complaint and learn acceptance strengthens.

I wipe away a trickling tear and learn letting go, hurts.

I join with a trusting soul and learn allowing another to help, helps.

In this very room the edge of the oxygen mask is lifted and God speaks to me, again and again.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we invite you to interrupt our self-satisfaction and teach us your way. Help us to listen for your still small voice in places we least expect. Truly, we do want to serve others in your name. Thank you for the lengths you go to get our attention. In Jesus' name. Amen. ❑

The Family that Plays Together Stays Together

Willie Batson
Portsmouth, N.H.

NOBEL PRIZE winner, Mother Teresa, said of today's family: "I think the world today is upside-down, and is suffering so much because there is so very little love in the homes and in family life. We have no time for our children, we have no time for each other; there is no time to enjoy each other."

Happy families, families that stay together, are committed to the family group. They spend time together. Time creates memories that will last a lifetime. Edith Schaeffer, in her classic book *What Is a Family?* writes, "What is a family meant to be? Among other things, I personally have always felt it is meant to be a museum of memories. Someone in the family. . . needs to be conscious that memories are important. Memories (not all of them, but some of them) should be planned with the same careful kind of planning one would give to designing a museum."

Someone in the family needs to be conscious that memories are important. Memories should be planned.

The importance of family time

A survey of 1500 school children were asked this question: "What do you think makes a happy family?" The children did not list material possessions, as might be expected. Their most frequent answer was, "doing things together." How a family uses, or misuses, its collective time is so crucial that it impacts every area of their relationship.

Spending a significant amount of time together in relaxing and enjoyable activities is a major building block to building that museum of memories about which Schaeffer was talking. The family that stays together is skillful in detaching itself from work and other responsibilities. Such a family develops its capacity for enjoyment and is attentive to its need to play.

There is a time to work and a time to play. "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven. . . a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance" (Ecclesiastes 3:1,4). There is also a reference to playing "Hide and Seek" in this Bible passage: ". . . a time to search and a time to give up" (v. 6). Well, I might be stretching the application at this point.

The family that plays together should recognize that play does not have to be equated with spending money. Family recreation is often more evident in low-income families. Those who live a simpler lifestyle know they don't have to have a lot of money in order to have a good time. Picnics, ball games, potlucks, hikes, a day in the mountains or at the beach—all of these can be inexpensive, often requiring only transportation. Probably every parent has had the experience of buying their child the latest gadget, only to have them set it aside to play with pots and pans or make a tent out of bedsheets.

Healthy humor

Playing together as a family should include a healthy dose of humor. There is increasing evidence that humor and laughter are therapeutic for all of us. Laughing is a tremendous boon to physical health. It steps up the pulse rate, activates muscles, and increases oxygen intake—all effects that match the beneficial aspects of physical exercise. Laughter causes remarkable physical relaxation, the reverse of stress, which can kill hypertension and coronaries. It can be used to defuse potentially stressful situations. Humor and fury cannot co-exist.

A distinction must be made: healthy families tend to laugh *with* one another while unhealthy families laugh *at* one another.

A distinction must be made: healthy families tend to laugh *with* one another while unhealthy families laugh *at* one another. It's advisable to follow these do's and don'ts of humor:

- Don't joke about deeply personal things.
- Teasing is okay if enough time has elapsed to take the edge off the blunder.
- Don't continually tease about the same thing.

- Don't joke if the other person is not allowed to joke equally with you.
- Laugh about actions, but not about the person or personality.
- Joke; don't ridicule.
- Be cautious of jokes about a person's friends.
- Make jokes about yourself.
- Don't joke about everything.
- Repeat tasteful jokes you hear or read.

The Scriptures have long emphasized the value of cheerfulness to our well-being. "A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit. . . All the days of the oppressed are wretched, but the cheerful heart has a continual feast. . . A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones. . . A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones" (Proverbs 15:13, 15, 30; 17:22).

Lack of time might be the most pervasive enemy the family has when playing together. As my older daughter moves on to college, I'm reminded of Tevya's song from *Fiddler on the Roof*, "Sunrise, sunset. Sunrise, sunset. Swiftly go the years." (As I stare at the college bill, I can be heard lamenting, "If I were a rich man. . .") Did we play enough? If only we had played more. Can we still play? These persuasive words from a song by Gloria Gaither, heard as I walk through my museum of memories, encourage me not to give up:

"We have this moment to hold in our hand,
And to touch as it slips through our fingers like sand.
Yesterday's gone and tomorrow may never come,
But we have this moment today." ❑

William Batson lives in Portsmouth, N.H. He ministers to New England families as he serves on the staff of the Kennebunk, Maine Advent Christian Church and the Evangelistic Association of New England.

My Father continued from page 15

I believe he thought more of us than he did himself.

Pop was a faithful husband. This September would have marked forty-eight years that he and Mom had been married. He was a devoted husband and loved my Mom as Christ loved the church.

Pop was a quiet man. He never liked to draw attention to himself. At the same time he was a strong man. He had firm convictions and he lived them daily. He was able to take unjust criticism and respond with love. As my Mom would often say, "He had broad shoulders." He lived Proverbs 27:2, "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips."

We all have our standards for greatness and we all have individuals that we place in that category. On the top of my list is Rev. Frederick Banks Setzer, Sr. He will be missed greatly, but we look forward with assurance to the day of resurrection when we will see him again. ❑

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

October

1 Praise God for the safe journey home for retiring Advent Christian missionaries **Beryl Joy Hollis**, **Barbara White**, and **Marion Damon**.

2 Pray that God will richly bless **Marion**, **Barbara**, and **Beryl Joy** especially during the first weeks and months of their retirement.

3 Praise God for his leading and direction for **Bill and Celia Jewell**, and **Tim and Ruth Fox**.

4 Pray that the **Fox and Jewell families** will sense God's presence and strength as they adjust to their new responsibilities on the mission field.

5 Praise God for the effective work that Asia/Pacific area director **George Teshera** has carried out on several recent journeys to India, the Philippines, New Zealand, and Malaysia.

6 Pray that God's will and direction will be provided for several issues pertaining to our older Advent Christian conference in **India**.

7 Praise God that despite strong Muslim opposition, the gospel of Jesus Christ is being communicated and proclaimed in **Malaysia**.

8 Pray that God will give strength and courage to Advent Christian national missionaries in **Malaysia** as they speak the truth of the gospel.

9 Praise God that **Russell and Noelle Carle** and their family have arrived in New Zealand and are beginning their ministry.

10 Pray that God will guide and direct **Russell and Noelle** as they look for ways to communicate the gospel in the greater Auckland area of New Zealand.

11 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Warren Prestidge** continues to have as director of Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

12 Pray that God will give wisdom and knowledge

to **Warren** in his administrative and teaching ministry at the college.

13 Praise God for the variety of ministry that **David Vignali** performs on behalf of Advent Christian work in the Philippines.

14 Pray that **David** will sense God's presence in a special way today as he serves Jesus Christ in the Philippines.

15 Praise God for the good ministry that **Margaret Helms** and **Karen Rigney** have carried out in the greater Kobe area of Japan.

16 Pray for **Steven and Ann Lay** as they complete their furlough and return to Japan for another term of service.

17 Praise God for the many Advent Christian congregations that have had record setting **Penny Crusades** during 1995.

18 Pray that God will continue to supply the financial needs of Advent Christian denominational work through **United Ministries**.

19 Praise God for the church-planting work that **Amos Gbaa** has carried out in the West African nation of Ghana.

20 Pray for Advent Christians in **Liberia** who along with other Christians there face the struggle of living in a nation torn apart by civil war.

21 Praise God for the continued ministry opportunities that **Frances and Lyne Ssebikindu** find in the inner city of Memphis, Tennessee.

22 Pray that God will richly bless the work of Advent Christian congregations involved in **urban and ethnic ministry**.

23 Praise God for the faithful ministry of **your pastor**.

24 Pray that your pastor and his family will sense **God's strength** in their lives today.

25 Praise God for **short-term mission teams** sent out by several Advent Christian congregations during the summer.

26 Pray that God will use the work of Advent Christians in **Nigeria** to touch many lives for Jesus Christ.

27 Praise God for his expression of **love and mercy** to us through Jesus Christ.

28 Pray for **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** as they provide leadership for the Advent Christian congregation in El Florido, Mexico.

29 Praise God for students studying for Christian ministry and service at **Oro Bible College** in the Philippines and **Tecate Bible Institute** in Mexico.

30 Pray for Advent Christian **college and university students** who are currently studying on campuses across Canada and the United States.

31 Begin to pray that God will use the upcoming Advent Christian General Conference **triennial sessions** next June to strengthen our sense of his will and direction.

Just Sixty Minutes

Just "sixty little minutes"—only sixty, Lord I pray
It's all I have the time for—in worship for today!
And Lord, if You should deem it to be
A little less of time—
Help me to see how blessed I am
for this small gift of Thine!

I have the day all scheduled, Lord—for this is "family day!"
My family—please, no others God
they may get in the way!
We have such busy lives, dear Lord, it's hard to sit so long
Just sixty minutes, quite enough
to sit or sing a song.

The preacher's sermon has lost appeal—
it's a repeat, I think.
The pews are hard and no 'footstool' to rest my anxious feet!
There's too much music anyway
I rarely try to sing
Help me, O Lord, to endure this hour
before my Sunday fling.

I've never learned to worship, Lord
I guess it takes some time to let you speak and love me, Lord.
Forgive my "flippant" mind
I need you Lord—so "do your thing"
Take more time if you will—to order and direct my life
Your ways in me fulfill.

Hum. . . sixty minutes. Is that too long?
To love, adore, and give?
Since Jesus too so much more time
to show me how to live.
This time I'll give in praise to You
And every day this week.
How selfish, Lord—to limit You to just one hour to speak!

To think I "Locked you in," O God
To think what I would miss—
To give You just an hour
to fix what You may see amiss!
I think I'll like "your hour" dear Lord
I feel refreshed—brand new!
My mind's made up, my heart kicks in—this hour
I'll "joy in You!"

O, praise your name! O Holy God
I'll love you in this hour.
I'll give my best—focus on You
reward me with your power
To live today with fresh insight
on what it means to be—
Yielded to You—now and each day
To worship, eternally!

The author is an active participant in an Advent Christian congregation.



Rev. F. Banks Setzer, Sr.

A Tribute to my Father

Tim Setzer
Waterville, Maine

SATURDAY, May 27, 1995. The phone rang at 6:00 a.m. It was a call I'll remember for the rest of my life. It was unexpected and heart wrenching to hear that the one I looked up to most in this world had fallen asleep in death. Words cannot express the pain or the void one feels in a time like this. Yet, it is always a comfort to know our loved one is asleep in Christ!

To those who knew him early in his life he was "Whitey." To most of his friends and colleagues he was Banks. And to his family he was "Pop." To everyone who knew him he was a man of God.

The Spirit's conviction

Pop grew up in Lincoln County, North Carolina, about 40 miles northwest of Charlotte. When he was a young boy he wanted nothing to do with the church or God. He would run and hide when the pastor came to visit. This distance from the church and God continued through his service in the Navy. But in 1949 things changed. The Maiden Advent Christian Church was holding revival services with Rev. Ted Pritchard as the evangelist. My great-grandfather, W.R. Braswell, asked Pop to go with him and for some reason he agreed to go. That night, Pop felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit and went forward to receive Jesus as his Lord and Savior. The next Sunday he was baptized in the Johns River. One month later he was asked to serve as the Sunday school superintendent and two years later, in 1951, he was ordained as an Advent Christian minister. He pastored the Maiden Church for two years before attending the New England School of Theology. Upon graduation, he served his Lord faithfully as a minister of the gospel until the day he died.

At Pop's funeral, Roland Griswold shared two words which described his life and ministry: faithful and humble.

At Pop's funeral, Roland Griswold shared two words which described his life and ministry: faithful and humble. He was faithful to God. After his death I had the opportunity to speak with one of his doctors. In that conversation she said he was one of the finest men she had ever known. She stated that he did not just talk about religious things but that he put his faith into practice. It was Pop's desire to please the Lord in everything he did.

A man of faith

He was faithful to the Word of God both in study and proclamation. I can still see him sitting in his chair when I would come home from school. He would have the Bible in his hand and several commentaries all around him. There was nothing he enjoyed more than being in the Scriptures. His proclamation of the Word was the full counsel of God. He did not preach to tickle people's ears.

He was a faithful pastor. It's one thing to be a preacher and another to be a pastor. He loved the people God had placed under his care and he was faithful to them in all circumstances. He did not neglect his responsibility to be with the people.

Pop was also faithful to his family. Although being a pastor puts a lot of stress on the family, Pop still made time to be with us. I can remember going to the golf course with him as a child and pulling his cart. Eventually I was able to graduate into playing golf with him. I can remember the vacations we spent at the beach and how Pop would lift me up and throw me over the waves. He attended all my ball games and he encouraged me in everything I did. He was the kind of Dad who would do anything he could to help his children. Even in his later years,

continued on page 13

A graduate of Berkshire Christian College and Columbia Theological Seminary (D.Min.), Tim Setzer is senior pastor of Blessed Hope Advent Christian Church in Waterville, Maine. He's a frequent contributor to the *Advent Christian Witness.*

Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
Contact missions office.

Marion Damon (March 27)
Contact missions office.

Beryl Joy Hollis (December 16)
Contact missions office.

Tim and Ruth Fox
Box 17, Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Warren Prestidge
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
145 S. Calumet Ave.
Aurora, IL 60506

Karen Rigney (June 5)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-794-62-8744

Floyd and Musa Powers
(October 8 and February 28)
15-3 1 Chome Higashi Fujie
Akashi Shi, Hyogoken 673
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-078-925-3416

Margaret Helms (September 18)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
Bududuram Refugee Camp
National Mobilization Program
Box 46
Accra, GHANA

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

Liberia and China
Our pastor in China
(September 30 and October 26)
All correspondence should be channelled through the missions office.

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devasahayam
Beulah Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Rev. T. and Victoria Devairakkam
33, Jalan Intan 4/1
Taman Intan,
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Mexico

Carlos Quintero
387 W. Poppyfields Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
(818) 791-2447

Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Carlos Quintero

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Vice-president
Harold Patterson; World Missions
Millie Griswold; Resource Development

P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

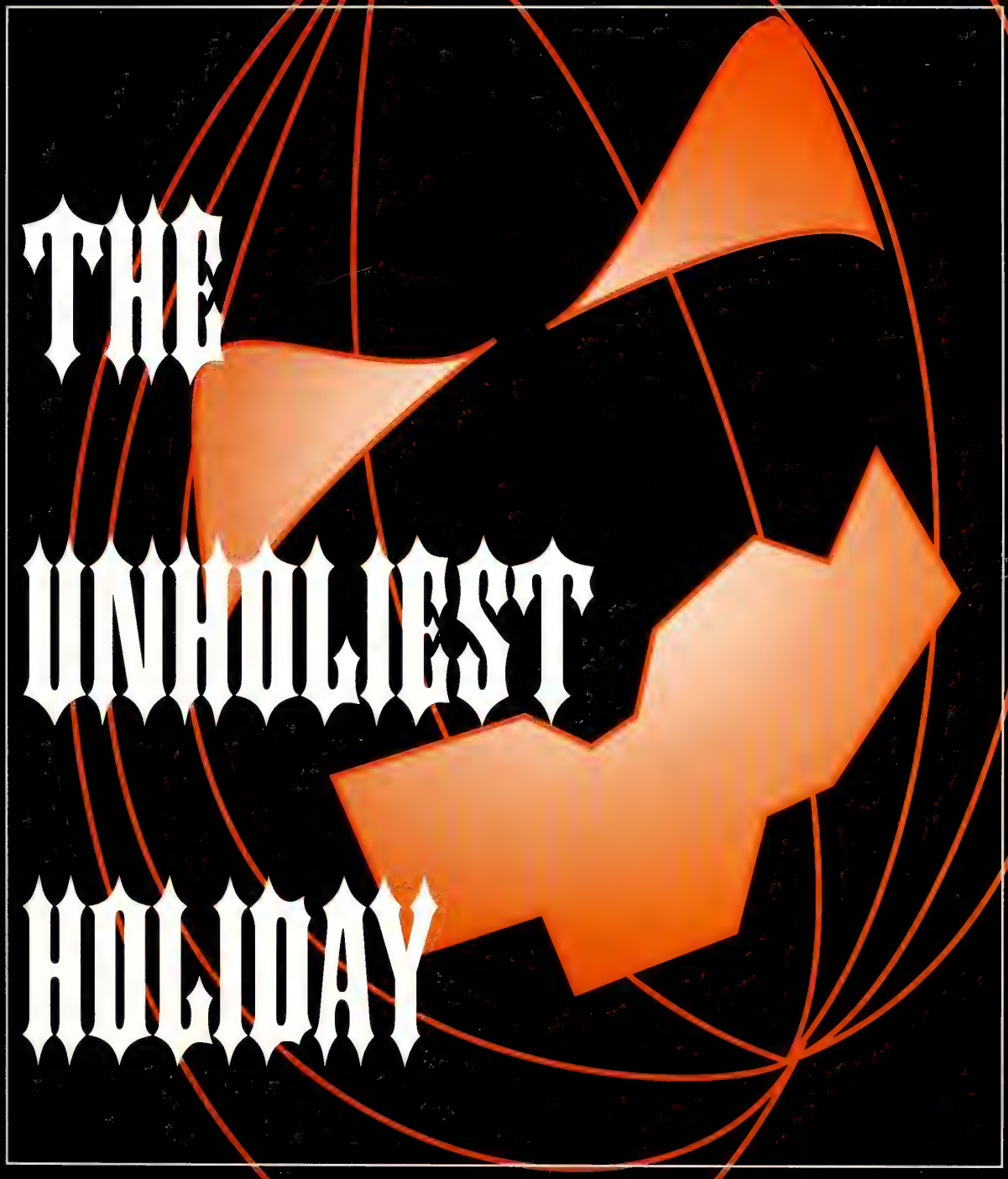
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Advent Christian

WITNESS

October 1995



THE UNHOLIEST HOLIDAY

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A Promise Yet to be Fulfilled 4

Pastor Lorne Ross reminds us that Jesus will return visibly and gloriously. That's the essence of Christian hope for the future.

John 1:42 by B.P. Bowse • **5**

Jesus Be Lord of All 6

The lordship of Jesus Christ is central to the message of Scripture. David McCarthy challenges us to give specific areas of our lives over to Jesus and express his lordship in how we live.

Where is Forgiveness? 8

We live in a time of rampant moral decay that impacts both church and society. Pastor Roy Morrison wrestles with the questions surrounding forgiveness especially as it relates to the growth of crime in American society.

The Unholiest Holiday 10

Should Christians encourage Halloween celebrations? Andy Bjorklund suggests that when we do, we promote Satan and his evil work in our society.

The Challenge of Surrender 16

Surrendering our lives to Jesus Christ can be difficult, but when we do, according to Bill O'Connor, we can experience the fullness of God's blessing and power. We set aside what we can do, which is little, to receive what the Almighty can do—which is everything.

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Should Christians celebrate Halloween? Andy Bjorklund suggests that an awareness of the holiday's occultic and pagan roots is important in answering that question.

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Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks** Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR



A New Marxist Agenda?

AS WE GO to press, the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women has opened in Beijing, China. Paradoxically, thousands have gathered under the agenda of women's rights in the capital of one of the most radically anti-woman regimes in human history.

Allowing the Communist Chinese to host such a conference is the moral equivalent of permitting the Ku Klux Klan to oversee the United States Civil Rights Commission. While the Soviet Union has crumbled and Eastern Europe has become more democratic, the Chinese government continues to hold thousands of political prisoners and suppress both political dissent and religious freedom. And they continue their pursuit of a population control policy that features coerced abortions and forced sterilization of women who wish to have more than one child. It's hard to imagine concern for women's rights in a nation where, in the words of the former Democratic governor of Pennsylvania Robert Casey, "tens of thousands of female children have been destroyed for no reason other than their sex."

Perhaps the reason the organizers of this conference have pressed forward despite the rampant human rights abuses of the host country has less to do with equality for women than with the agenda of some radical elements of the American feminist movement. American feminism is a complex movement and unfortunately, evangelicals have not always distinguished between the parties and groups that compete to set the agenda for American feminism. The majority of American women are, to use a term coined by Mary Kassian in her book *Women, Creation and the Fall*, "relational" feminists who are concerned primarily with economic opportunity for women and seeing to it that women are recognized as whole and valuable persons. They are not revolutionaries who advocate wholesale structural changes. And they recognize that there are legitimate differences between men and women, differences that impact the role and function of men and women in families and in society.

That's a different agenda from that of the radical or "gender" feminists who control the women's studies departments at a number of American colleges and universities. Gender feminists regard marriage, family, and traditional moral norms as enemies of human progress. For these feminists, there are no real physical and emotional differences between women and men. The differences we see have been produced by a male-dominated society and the only way for women to be fully equal is through the elimination of traditional understandings of marriage and family. Indeed, central to the agenda of the gender feminists at the U.N. Conference is an effort to create an internationally recognized "human right" to "alternative lifestyles."

The gender feminist agenda is an adaptation of the political ideology of Karl Marx. Marx believed that economic change, culminating in socialism, would transform culture. But the new Marxists, gender feminists included, believe that cultural change must precede socialism. Any cause that undermines traditional moral and cultural values becomes a means for transforming culture. And a conference like the one in Beijing becomes a tool to undermine traditional understandings of marriage and family and replace them with an ideology that's far more radical and dangerous.

Fortunately, there are signs that the gender feminist agenda is meeting resistance at the U.N. conference from women throughout the world who realize that family integrity and women's equality are complementary ideas. Governor Casey puts it well when he writes, "Expanding economic opportunity for women, equal pay for equal work, and other principles of non-discrimination need not be linked to a devaluation of the roles of wife and mother. Instead, we should promote programs and policies that offer women meaningful alternatives to abortion, poverty, and exploitation." Maybe there will come a time when those at the U.N. will see the wisdom of those words. In the meantime, I hope that Christians everywhere will take up that challenge. ❑

Who was it who touched the eyes of the blind man and helped him to see? It was Jesus. This same Jesus is coming back and the scales will drop from every eye.

A Promise Yet to be Fulfilled

Rev. Lorne Ross
Auburndale, Fla.

UNQUESTIONABLY, the second coming of Christ is the greatest doctrine in the Bible except that of salvation. I don't know everything about the second coming of Jesus Christ, but I do know where I can learn all about this great subject—from the Scriptures, the Word of God. In Acts 1, Luke speaks of four great truths: the risen Christ, the exalted Lord, the witnessing church, and the returning Savior.

We see **the risen Savior** in Acts 1:3. The disciples knew too well the fact of the crucifixion, the death and burial of their Lord. Nothing but a miracle could make them believe he was alive. If the nails, the tomb, the stone, and the Roman seal could not keep Jesus in the grave, no power could conquer the living Christ.

Ours is not a church of the entombment; ours is a church of the resurrection. The angels proclaimed it, the empty tomb displayed it, and the appearance of Christ confirmed it. It was this truth for which Peter, Paul, James, and Stephen gave their lives. Thus we quote from Romans 10:9, "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Jesus declares in Revelation 1:18, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore." Jesus says to you and me, I will never leave nor forsake you. I am alive forevermore; therefore your preaching is not in vain. I am alive forevermore; therefore, I will send the Holy Spirit who will abide with you and be in you. I am alive forevermore; therefore, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Because Jesus is alive forevermore, Satan is not the conqueror, death is defeated and one day all who are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth. The same power that raised up Christ from the dead will quicken your mortal bodies.

Days of unlimited service

The exalted Lord is lifted up in verse nine. Jesus was taken up and a cloud received him. He did not go away; he only disappeared from sight. The days of limited service were over and the days of unlimited service were about to begin. Christ was taken up to begin his priestly ministry (Hebrews 9:24). He entered the Holy of Holies now to appear in the presence of God for us. Thus, John 14:12, "Greater works than these shall ye do because I go to my Father," may be fulfilled. Missionaries are serving around the world and accomplishing much in the name of Jesus, because Christ is working through them. Men and women are serving God in effective ministry in our churches here at home because Christ is working through them. He went away so that Pentecost could come.

The witnessing church is mandated in Acts 1:8. We are the keepers of a sacred trust. Jesus said, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons." You have other work to do and for that you need power. The most powerful incentive to witnessing is seeing the risen Christ. There must first be an inflow of the Spirit before the outflow. Jesus said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me... beginning at Jerusalem." It was not an easy place. Jerusalem had just experienced conflict over Jesus' death and resurrection. One of his disciples had betrayed him. Another had denied him.

We who know Jesus are the temples of the Holy Spirit, thus possessing supernatural power. We are to be channels, not reservoirs or holding tanks. The Lord's power will not be squandered on us long if we refuse to be channels of his grace. Dr. Hyman Appleman, the great evangelist, tells

the story of a young man from Northwestern University who swam out to a sinking vessel over and over and rescued eleven people who were drowning. Returning to shore totally exhausted he was given a sedative by a doctor and fell asleep. His brother sat watchfully by his side. Toward morning the young man opened his eyes, looked at his brother and asked, "How many did I rescue? Were all the rest saved?" "Yes, all 23 of them," his brother answered. "Did I do my best?" he asked again. "Yes, you surely did" was the reply. He fell asleep again and awakened to ask again, "Did I do my best?" When the trumpet sounds and we rise to meet Jesus, will we hear from him, "You have done your best"?

Finally, Luke draws our attention to **the returning Savior** in verse eleven." This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." There is a story told about a farmer's clock that malfunctioned late one night and struck 17 times. The farmer went all over the house waking everyone saying, "Get up! It's later than it has ever been before." We are living in such a time today. Notice in our Scripture that he who will return will be the same Lord whom the disciples saw leave. It was a visible person who left and it will be a visible person who shall return.

Who was it who touched the eyes of the blind man and helped him to see? It was Jesus. This same Jesus is coming back and the scales will drop from every eye. Who was it that enabled the cripple by the pool of Bethesda to walk? It was Jesus. This same Jesus is coming again and the lame shall leap. Who was it who brought healing to a woman whom no physicians could heal? It was Jesus. This same Jesus is coming again and healing will flow like a river through every body. Who was it that entered a home of sorrow and death and brought Lazarus back to life? It was Jesus. This same Jesus is coming back and all the graves will be opened. Who was it who graced the marriage in Cana of Galilee and turned the water into wine? It was Jesus. This same Jesus is coming back again to celebrate the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Let me bring other witnesses to testify to the certainty of Christ's return. **Abraham** looked for a city whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:10). **Moses** looked forward to his reward (Hebrews 11:26). **Job** said, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another" (Job 19:25-27). **Daniel** revealed in a dramatic way an image representing four kingdoms—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Then a stone cut without hands destroyed the image and set up a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44). **Peter** exhorted, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). **Paul** proclaimed, "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). **John** writes, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is" (John 3:2).

Jesus himself declares, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:3). Christ will come visibly and gloriously. Every eye shall see him. At that time all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come forth. Jesus is coming again to reign on the earth that cast him out. There will be a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness will dwell. Jesus is coming again as judge. It will be a time of judgment separating the sheep from the goats and the wheat from the tares. Jesus is coming again and there will be no more death. It will be the end of sorrow, heartache, and affliction. God shall wipe all tears from their eyes. It will be a day of peace, for the Prince of Peace has come. Nations will no longer practice war. People will beat their swords into plowshares. Jesus is coming to be the eternal King. All other monarchs will bow and do homage to him. He will reign over a regenerated earth in the capital—the new Jerusalem. His citizens will be those who have been redeemed, cleansed by his blood and clothed with immortality.

When Jesus returns it will be Coronation Day. It will be a day of triumph and victory. The church redeemed by his blood will be presented to the Father. Jesus is coming again to be greeted by such a host as no man can number. We will sing the triumphant anthem, "Alleluia, the Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth" (Revelation 19:6). Let us be ready for that great Day! ❑

Lorne Ross and his wife, Arla, have served Advent Christian congregations for over forty years. They currently live in Auburndale, Florida. This article is from a message Pastor Ross delivered earlier this year at the Southern Regional Convention at Camp Dixie, N.C.

John 1:42

Old, unused stones lay on the ground,
The sculptor's eyes are glazed,
"Look at the treasure I have found,"
Potential is appraised.

Hands, hammer, chisel amputate,
The artist's eyes ablaze,
Envisioning life within death's gates,
Prodigality is razed.

"Living stones" feel their Maker's hand
While he both cuts and brazes,
"Someday My art you'll understand
And workmanship you'll praise."

—B.P. Bowse

B.P. Bowse is pastor of Valley Advent Christian Church in Arleta, Calif.

JESUS Be Lord of All

David S. McCarthy
Portsmouth, N.H.

A NORTH American Christian who visited a worship service in the former Soviet Union returned home with a stirring tale of faith holding firm under pressure. He described how the congregation shouted in unison, "Jesus is Lord!" The words may have been accompanied by tears, but the faces of those Russian Christians glowed with a radiance that only comes from a personal walk with Christ.

"Jesus is Lord!" The earliest followers of the Nazarene loved that truth. At the heart of Peter's Pentecostal sermon was the affirmation, "God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Paul declared, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Romans 10:9). In his letter to the Colossians, Paul pointed to the Master's work as Creator and Sustainer of the universe as proof that Jesus is "Lord of all" (1:17, *Phillips*).

Lord of the universe; Lord over the nations; Lord of history—that is God's appointed role for his Son. However, the fact that we acknowledge his rule in the affairs of humankind must not be the end of the matter, for Jesus seeks to reign as Lord in our personal living. The most crucial issue for any Christian is whether or not to submit to the control of the Savior in day-to-day situations. Let's examine three factors that will help us make the right choice.

Realize the claim of Christ

Peter puts it simply: "In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord" (1 Peter 3:15, *Phillips*). "Give him the chief place," cries the apostle. "Pledge your exclusive loyalty to Jesus in all you do."

Exclusive loyalty. That was the point Jesus made in his Sermon on the Mount. You recall that he said, "No man can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24). In the ancient world, the slave-master relationship was tilted in favor of the owner. A slave had no rights, he was simply the property of another person. He had no time of his own, but was on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There was never a moment that he could choose his own course of action. Without approving of an inhumane system, Jesus used it to illustrate his claim over men and women who profess to follow him. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in *Cost of Discipleship*, "Our hearts have room for only one all-embracing devotion and we can only cleave to one Lord."

Jesus took that concept of exclusive loyalty and reminded his disciples that lordship involved obedience. Remember these words? "Why do you call me Lord and refuse to do the things I require of you?" (Luke 6:46). It is a valid question for disciples today.

Maybe the issue of lordship will come into clearer focus if we ponder a story told by former World Vision President Samuel Kamaleson. A peanut vendor in south India was proud to own his little business. He felt independent in his role as president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. But his operation seemed always to run deep in red ink. One afternoon, the man went into a restaurant for his daily round of tea and cakes. He was sitting alone when a well-dressed man entered, looked around, and inquired if he might join the peanut vendor. In conversation, the man revealed that he, too, was a business executive. He told of his vast holdings, but announced sadly, "I have all the capital I need, but no personnel. Perhaps we could merge our businesses—I put up the money, you take care of managing personnel." The vendor stiffened and a voice inside warned, "Be careful. If you accept his offer you may lose your positions. You may only be vice-president." "I couldn't possibly consider your offer until I knew more about you," the vendor finally replied.

"Perhaps if I tell you that my name is Rockefeller, that will be enough," said the businessman. At that the voice inside the vendor whispered, "You'd

better be careful. If you agree to his terms, you *will be* only the vice president." With that, the peanut vendor shook his head, squared his shoulders, and walked out of the restaurant. He understood the claims of the well-to-do executive, but was not willing to pay the price. How like vast numbers of men and women who turn away from Christ today.

Recognize the consequences

Would you agree with me that many Christians sing and speak respectfully of Jesus being Lord in a general way, but they fail to see that he wishes to exercise his lordship in specific areas of their lives. One consequence of serving him as Lord may be to feel his touch on your business life and to hear his inquiry about the amount of money we return to him, the ways we spend what we consider our own, and the methods we use to earn the total.

He may ask uncomfortable questions about our pastimes, our social activities, the friends we choose, our dealings with neighbors, friends, and even members of our family. And think what owning Christ as Lord may mean for our plans, goals, and ambitions. Add career choices and marriage to the list and you'll see what I mean by "consequences." Christ will issue demands in specific areas of living—he will get down to basics with us. When the demands come, will you be ready to do whatever he requires?

Many Christians sing and speak respectfully of Jesus being Lord in a general way, but they fail to see that he wishes to exercise his lordship in specific areas of their lives.

Another consequence of making Christ Lord: We may expect Satan to challenge our commitment. Once we decide to give Christ his rightful place, be prepared for a struggle. Expect him to victimize potential disciples with lines that sound like the doubts he stirred in Adam and Eve. He will say, "God is trying to withhold something good," or "Go ahead, you owe it to yourself." Expect Satan to probe your inner life with such talk, but seek Christ's help to withstand the enemy.

Remember that when we do surrender something we hold dear, the one we honor as Lord will make our life joyful beyond belief. The late Paul Rees tells about a meeting in a small Quaker church in Ohio. Attendance was small that afternoon, but Dr. Rees felt led to invite people forward to pray. One older lady came to the altar and murmured, "Lord, you *can have* my Mary." Later, he learned that the woman was a widow and Mary was her only child. She was facing retirement with the usual fears of becoming dependent, and was blocking her daughter's decision to enter missionary service. As the woman left the place of prayer, Dr. Rees reported that her face seemed to glow with a radiance that lighted up the age lines. The struggle was over. Jesus was Lord and he was bestowing a happiness that nothing in this world gives.

Recognize the consequences as you consider the lordship of Christ.

Respond to the challenge

Are you clear on what the lordship of Christ means? Simply, it suggests that he be given top priority in all our decisions; that he be invited to control every aspect of the Christian's personality. For some, this commitment comes when we turn to the Lord Jesus and ask him to forgive our sins. In that moment of surrender, we see ourselves yielding to his control for life. But other sincere Christians have never thought seriously about this matter of lordship. Christ as Savior, yes. But what is this commitment to crown him Lord? Romans 12:1 thunders "Present your bodies (yourselves in total) a living sacrifice. . . unto God." There you have it. Give yourself to Christ, telling him that you intend to be his obedient servant as long as you live. His will shall be yours, his commands your delight.

But there are times when that commitment needs renewal. Perhaps we seize control of our lives from under the rule of Christ, or he may shed light on something we have not yet turned over to him. Don't feel ashamed to reaffirm again and again, "Jesus, be my Lord!"

Robert Munger drives home the challenge in his little booklet, *My Heart, Christ's Home*. In parable-like form, Munger tells how he welcomed Jesus into his life as a man might invite a guest to share his home. However, as Munger shows the Master various rooms, there comes a strange feeling of guilt. He finds that the Lord seems displeased at some furnishings; that sadness marks his features over books in the library of the mind. In the dining room of desires and appetites, Christ pushes away the food offered him. He is grieved that his host delights in a menu that is totally self-satisfying. In the drawing room, Jesus waits alone for his host to keep an early morning appointment, while Munger sleeps in, unconcerned about the wishes of his heavenly Guest.

They continue until, at the top of the stairs, the Lord rejects a foul-smelling closet. Munger protests that the contents are precious to him and he would not think of giving up the object of his affection. But the Lord complains about the terrible odor and starts to leave. That's the last straw. Munger acknowledges that the continuing presence of Christ means more to him than anything in the closet, the library or the dining room. He agrees to the terms required by Christ. He might well have used the words of the

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Where is Forgiveness?

Roy L. Morrison
Olustee, Fla.

WE'RE ABOUT seven years into one of the most difficult periods in church history. We're victims of moral decay, failure of our people to secure holy living in Christ Jesus. The church has been rocked at its foundation by sexual immorality of varying degrees. When and how do we go about offering forgiveness to these fallen ones? Do we pick and choose which ones to forgive and which ones to taunt with their failure?

The forgiveness road

Is there any morally sound person who doesn't loathe sex offenses? Can anyone deny that such offenders need to be punished? Can a sex offender be forgiven and reinstated into the mainstream of society? How much emphasis do we put on the victim? Can we forgive the way God forgives? One last question: When, and how much do we forgive the offender?

Let's look at a case in point. I know of a political leader who has always been tough on criminals. He's a spiritually perceptive church leader, wealthy, and looked up to. Yet, this man enticed the wife of one of his employees into a sexual liaison. Then, to cover his tracks, he had the man murdered.

What should happen to an individual like this? How tough should we be on such criminals?

Where are we headed?

Before we answer the questions concerning this particular politician and his criminal activity, let's look at what Dick Purnell wrote in his perceptive book, *Free to Love Again*: "In our culture, sex outside marriage is increasingly alluring because of the free promotion it gets... Television programs, movies, romance novels, and magazines glamorize the adventure and beauty of 'responsible' sex—and it all looks so safe, so thrilling, so positive, so good, and so much like fun.

"Make no mistake: Sexual intimacy within the God-ordained parameters of marriage is wonderful and fulfilling. God created sex, and he designed our bodies with the capacity to enjoy it fully.

"Being sexually active outside the marriage bond, though, as glamorous as it may appear, is like opening Pandora's box. It has a downside which people don't know about—and don't want to know about. Once the momentary sexual excitement has ended, the repercussions can be devastating. Out of the box pours mental, emotional, and physical anguish—guilt, shame, frustration, loss of respect, distrust. Out of the box pour traumatic experiences—a devastating breakup, an abortion, a hasty marriage, an unwanted child, venereal disease. Lift the lid on sexual intimacy outside marriage and it explodes in your face."

One man's failure

The politically powerful, wealthy man I mentioned earlier took one look at another man's wife and had to have her. Even though she was the wife of a neighbor and trusted employee, and the big shot could have had any number of women, he set his passion aflame for another man's wife. A beautiful woman, no doubt. But she was not his to have.

Why would such a man set out to pervert, desecrate, and destroy the marriage of a young couple who had dedicated themselves to one another? Yes, the wealthy man was handsome, powerful, and in his mid-forties he could offer this young woman a life of luxury and ease. If she would give in to his overtures he would see to it that she was well cared for and all she ever wanted would be provided.

But what the powerful man forgot was that this young woman was all that her husband had. He wasn't wealthy, nor did he have the wherewithal to pick and choose from any number of women who would want to marry him. This young and beautiful wife was his treasure. He labored for meager pay, dedicated to his job and his employer. He truly loved his wife. She, no doubt, was the love of

his youth.

When his job took him away, his bride was left vulnerable. She was ready prey for the perverted concepts devised in the mind of a politically powerful man who was supposed to be a "pillar of the church."

It was during one of these times when the husband was away that "Mr. Powerful" saw his chance and seized it. He had one of his people send for the young woman and, with choice dining, superb wine, and plenty of expensive finery she was seduced into his bedroom. Although all the details aren't clear, it appears this liaison didn't end with a one-night sexual encounter, but developed into an ongoing, full-fledged affair that carried no pretense of love and marriage. In time though, she made an announcement to the man who tantalized her. "Dave," she said, "You need to know. I'm pregnant."

Obviously Dave hadn't made preparation for this. Her husband had been away for a long time and had not been home to have any relations with her. Dave had to do something quick. He sent for his loyal employee and tried to get him to go home and be with his wife. The man refused to go home while other employees weren't privileged to have such a benefit. Dave was beside himself.

Does God forgive even those who are in prison for their crimes? As I search the Scriptures, I find that the answer is *yes.*

In desperation, through one of his underlings, Dave made arrangements to have his girlfriend's husband murdered. He set it all up, gave the order, and provided all the right ingredients. When it was over, the "smoking gun" was in his hand. He was fully responsible for the man's death even though he made certain he wasn't present when it went down.

He was soon confronted by a church leader with what he did. He was shown the meager existence of this young couple, and just how much the husband had loved his sweet wife. He was told what an ogre he was for stealing this man's sole possession when, as a politician and wealthy man, he had so much. God's words were in that theologian's mouth and, upon that confrontation, the politician was struck with deep remorse. The realization of his offense hit him in the heart and he cried out to God.

Oddly, it was as though he had been doing his heinous acts blindly. When confronted, he seemed to come to his senses. He instantly saw himself for what he was. He hated the image. He became bitter with himself for falling into moral failure and he sincerely repented, sobbed, and begged God to forgive him.

Could he undo what he'd done? Of course not. Could he remove his sexual sin with this young woman? Not on his life. Could he raise her husband from the dead? Absolutely not! Did he wish he could remove his failure and the effects it had on the victims? Yes, but he couldn't. The damage had been done. How then could he be forgiven this terrible moral failure?

God's grace

The Bible says, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). God's Word says that each of us has murdered if we have *hated* someone in our heart. We've committed sexual sin (just as this man did) if we have *lusted* after someone else's spouse. We are all just as guilty as the one who actually commits the crime. Obviously there is a difference between *physically* committing adultery and murder and simply considering it in our heart. Although there is no moral difference, there is a consequential difference.

This political leader who committed sexual indiscretion and murder was not put in prison, he received no punishment from a judge in a courtroom, yet, God in his judgment put some heavy punishment on the man. The baby his lover was carrying was born and lived just long enough to die at its mother's side. Later, this man's other sons followed in their father's footsteps. Yes, his sons committed sexual crimes within the family. One son even raped his half-sister. Incest, rape, murder, sexual sin of all kinds ran rampant within this family. Yet after the story is told and he has repented, whenever God's Word refers to this man (King David), *his sin is never mentioned*. God so forgives and forgets sin, even sexual sin and murder, that he refers to David as a man whose heart was "perfect" in his sight.

Wait a minute

Does God forgive and forget the sexual sin, the perversion, the altogether loathsome acts of men and women when they repent? Even those who are in prison for their crimes? As I search the Scriptures, I find that the answer is *yes*.

But, wait a minute, let's not be hasty and simply let everyone out of prison and forgive and forget. That wouldn't be prudent, nor would it be healthy for society.

Let's take a look at the life of David to see why God would turn this man's sin away and call him "perfect." As we study it, we can see by his very lifestyle that he really loved God and *wanted* to live a righteous life. He wasn't "normally" a murderer. Proof of that is the fact that he had many opportunities to kill his enemy, King Saul, yet refused to do so because Saul was "God's anointed." David's heart was bent to serve God no matter the cost to himself. He wasn't sexually permissive either. We have no written historical references on which to build a case against him concerning sexual indiscretion, except for this one mishap.

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THE UNHOLIEST HOLIDAY



Andy Bjorklund
Everett, Wash.

WHAT ARE YOUR Halloween memories? Who among us has never gone trick-or-treating as a colorful character, pulled a prank on someone's property, or indulged in festivities at a friend's home during that well-known October evening? The event has an attraction all its own when magnified by the autumn colors, traditional foods, and attached mysteries. For many years I participated in this frolic because of its popularity for party gatherings, but was continually intrigued by its uncertain purpose. When you enter into a study of the occult realm, however, its origins become much clearer. Behind the apparent harmlessness of this popular holiday are spiritual problems and even dangerous implications. These include occult practices which are God-forbidden abominations, a specific calendar date established for anti-Christian rituals, and the related risk of demonic oppression for those who participate. Consequently, I strongly urge fellow Christians to reconsider their response to the next Halloween season. Let us examine some of the basic Halloween elements to see why.

What the Bible teaches about occultism

Occultism is the human pursuit of ancient and hidden knowledge which promises the acquisition of supernatural powers and self-achieved spiritual evolution. The primary objective of an occultist is personal power. The person who seeks to master occult knowledge directly challenges God's authority as revealed in the Bible. To add to this spiritually hazardous position, the occult world rejects a clear biblical distinction between good and evil. Although a seeker may justify his or her effort with good intentions, personal power persists as the primary motivation. This pattern began

Behind the apparent harmlessness of this popular holiday are dangerous implications.

in the Garden of Eden when Satan successfully tempted Eve with forbidden knowledge that would enable her to acquire a divine nature. The conflict between the occult arts and God's instructions repeats itself throughout the pages of Scripture. The dramatic confrontation between Moses and Pharoah's magicians in Exodus 7-8 reminds us of the enduring struggle. Don't overlook the fact

that the Egyptian masters successfully duplicated the Hebrew miracles of the serpent and the plagues of blood and frogs. Centuries later we find relevant comments from Paul and John in the New Testament. The secret knowledge of the occult was their repeated concern as it manifested itself in gnosticism and similar forms.

Regarding occult practices, the Bible specifically condemns sorcery (Malachi 3:5), witchcraft (2 Kings 21:6), spirit contact (Leviticus 20:27), fortune telling (1 Samuel 15:23), and astrology (Isaiah 47:13). Are not these practices the same ones which provide a major share of the Halloween traditions? As God condemns their activities in his Word, we have a responsibility as his servants to avoid that which encourages their acceptance.

All Hallows' Eve

The true nature of Halloween is concealed by widespread ignorance of its historical roots and the occult connections. Often we hear even Christians excuse themselves from any concern with Halloween by explaining that it is a pagan tradition that has been Christianized. Just as Christmas was combined with the winter solstice celebrations of ancient Rome and medieval Europe, many assume that the replacement of the medieval Day of the Dead celebration by the church's All Saints' Day (November 1) has dealt with the Halloween problem. Whether the continuing Roman Catholic tradition of All Saints' Day has overcome the cultural dominance of an earlier pagan rite is irrelevant because Halloween does not come on November 1. *Halloween* is a Scottish contraction for "All Hallows' *Eve*," meaning the *evening before* All Saints Day—and for a very significant reason. Halloween serves as the second most important of the six major devil worship ceremonies in the witches' calendar.

The Bible warns us that the primary source of occult power is the demonic realm (Ephesians 6:12). The inherent dangers of occult practices are intensified when many people do not regard them as a serious threat. The nature of witchcraft, for example, has been confused by our media-driven culture and related marketing. TV shows, films, and magazines have saturated us for decades with the so-called positive aspects of modern witchcraft. The realities of the higher levels of witchcraft and satanism, however, provide a grim contrast. For centuries the witches' ceremonial gathering (called a *sabbat*) served as a special assembly for frenzied orgies and pagan worship. In the medieval era their rituals evolved into the Black Mass, incorporating sexual perversions and animal or human sacrifices.

The dangers of occult practices are intensified when many people do not regard them as a serious threats.

The later trends were designed to be defiant desecrations of the Christian sacraments. Although much of the occult world has been exploited by profit-minded counterfeits, some of the participants have committed their souls to satanic servitude and acquired demonic power in return. Simultaneous to our benevolent distribution of Halloween candy to children, those who know the original purpose of the event are busy expressing their satanic allegiance in harmful forms. This is why Halloween truly is Satan's holiday.

Undermining the gospel

When we involve ourselves as Christians with Halloween we are failing to expose the deeds of darkness as commanded in Ephesians 5:11 and undermining our witness to the greater light in the Gospel. Not only do we deaden the sensitivity that everyone should have toward occult practices, but we also mislead people with contradictory behavior. If you serve the Lord, does it make any sense to wear an occult or pagan symbol just because it's a fashion fad? Why should it be any more acceptable to recognize the powers of darkness with costumed parties and excuse ourselves by saying it's only for fun? The next time you hear "trick or treat," remember that it began with the ancient druid priests who solicited young women (the treat) for human sacrifice to their pagan gods with the threat of a spell (the trick) upon any uncooperative households.

Being Christian should not deprive us of fun and fantasy. Rather than retreating into the role of a depriving scrooge, we should respond to Satan's work with something better. Halloween actually offers unique opportunities for communicating the gospel. Many churches are experiencing increasing success in reaching young people with alternative celebrations. Why not rally your fellowship to do the same? Choose another name such as the Radiance Feast, the Shadow Streakers Party, or even Devil Demolition Day! Masquerade as biblical or historical characters who depict hope and peace, instead of fear and darkness. Include in your program a biblical expose of the occult. Above all "proclaim the excellence of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Wouldn't that be better than sending kids away from your home overloaded with sweets into a dangerous night? ❑



Andy Bjorklund is a veteran observer of pseudo-Christian and non-Christian religious movements including the New Age Movement. He and his wife Pauline live in Everett, Washington.

Is Your Church a Missionary Church?

The Challenge of Acts 1:8

Harold Patterson
Charlotte, N.C.

IF YOU WERE to ask a number of Christians to list their ten favorite Scripture passages, I'm sure Acts 1:8 would be on that list. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (NIV). This popular and often preached text has been called by some the "outline of the book of Acts." Others have called it the "outline of the spread of the church through history." Others have explained this verse to be the reason why the Holy Spirit was given.

All of the above are true, but I also believe that this is a strategy given by Jesus Christ to his church. It's a strategy that continues to push the church into all the world with an evangelistic outreach.

A strategy for missions

This strategy of going to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth reflects the heart of the gospel for "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son" Jesus to die for the sins of the whole world. Because of Jesus Christ, a time is coming when the whole world—including all its ethnic or "people groups"—will worship God. This was the goal Jesus set forth when he declared that "when this gospel goes as a witness into all the nations (or ethnic groups) then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14).

It's also a strategy for denominations interested in reaching lost people for Jesus Christ. This text helps answer a question that many have asked, "Is there a difference between home and foreign missions?" I personally don't see it in this passage. There is no division between whether we are to reach into the next town or around the world. It's clear from this passage that as a denomination we are to do both, and with great vigor.

> The missionary church encourages people to develop their spiritual gifts to reach out into ministries within their community.

The including of Samaria by Jesus in this text was no accident! The Jewish Christians were to carry the gospel to a people from a different cultural background, a background that they considered inferior to Judaism. So, too, we are challenged to share Christ with those of different ethnic backgrounds in our land. Did you know that most denominations that are growing significantly in America today are those engaged in cross-cultural ethnic ministry? I believe this is a ministry that is close to the heart of our Lord, who himself "had to go through Samaria." Our Samarias may not be so far from us, perhaps only a few blocks from our church.

I was talking with a mission executive of a denomination not much larger than ours. Yet they have almost ten times as many missionaries on the field as we do. I asked him how they were able to achieve this, and he responded that it rested on their conviction as a denomination that the missionary thrust was to be the center of their ministry. It also involved urging their best and finest young leadership to go overseas and be supported by the people at home. And it reflects the vision of a lost world to be won for Christ that is held out regularly in their churches to their members.

I cannot help but think this was originally the driving force behind the Advent Christian Church. Within five years of our creation as a denomination in 1860 we had formed a mission society and its first outreach work was to the newly freed slaves of the southern United States. We moved across geographical and ethnic lines to reach people for the Lord and to build new churches. Then, with the conviction of our beliefs, our work began to spread overseas.

We need to see the Advent Christian Church in this light once again,

that we are primarily a missionary denomination with a passion to share life only in Christ with all who will listen.

Perhaps the most controversial thought of this short passage in Acts is that the challenge of Jesus Christ was given to the local church. Granted it was the only church at that time, but it was a local church in Jerusalem. Reaching the world for Jesus Christ was to be the ministry of that local church.

Dr. Dwight Smith, president of United World Missions and author of the book *Building Churches That Care*, clarifies three kinds of local Bible-believing churches: A typical local church, a mission-minded church, and a missionary or world-evangelism church. To summarize, he would define the typical local church as one that concentrates on building and maintaining its local program with perhaps some investment outside the local church. Missions may be presented in the church, but as an elective or an emphasis for some particular society or committee within the church. It doesn't have much impact on the total ministry of the church.

It seeks to reach out to all kinds of people with the good news of Jesus' love for them

The second category is a mission-minded church, a church with a desire to keep missions in the forefront of the church. In that church, people are encouraged to pray for missions and to give to missions. It has a prominent place in its program, and in many cases it sponsors an annual mission conference.

But the missionary or world-evangelism church is a church that operates with Acts 1:8 at the very core of its purpose. The whole ministry of the church is shaped and developed for an outreach at home and around the world. People are challenged to become Christians, be discipled, and to use their spiritual gifts to reach out to others. It's a church that seeks to give, not to consume! It's a church that equips its people for ministry. It's a church that is dedicated to Great Commission discipleship.

What does the ministry of such a missionary church look like? It has a strong Bible preaching and teaching ministry. It identifies the needs of people within its congregation, develops small nurturing groups, and emphasizes each member using his or her spiritual gifts within the body. But it's more than that. The missionary church encourages people to develop their spiritual gifts to reach out into ministries within their community and surrounding communities. It builds people up so they will be open to the call of God to ministry within Canada and the United States.

The missionary church realizes that "missions has come home to America" with a tremendous influx of people and nationalities from throughout the world. It seeks to reach out to all kinds of people with the good news of Jesus' love for them and by establishing nurturing groups or separate congregations that minister in the culture and language of these groups. The missionary church is actively involved in racial reconciliation. It uses its resources to meet the needs of those who are disadvantaged in the name of Jesus Christ. It puts forth a positive Christian witness. A church like this, motivated in such a manner, reaches around the world through short-term missions trips, by freeing their pastor for overseas ministry, and by asking God to raise up from in its midst those who would carry the gospel not only cross-culturally but across oceans.

A missionary church is also concerned for its young people. It does not simply entertain its children and teens but disciples them to reach out to their peers for Christ and to be burdened for world evangelism.

A dynamic witness

I remember our missionary, Margaret Helms, saying that she believed the ideal formula for a church and its ministry was that a church congregation ought to tithe its membership to full-time Christian service. In other words, ten percent of a congregation ought to be leaving the local church to begin other ministries and ten percent of this number ought to be carrying the gospel into other lands. It's a worthy goal for a missionary church.

What would that mean for the Advent Christian Church today? It would mean 2,000 people serving full-time across the United States and Canada, and 300 missionaries in overseas outreach ministries. Remember that's only a tithe of what the Lord provides to the local church. This is truly a "witness." Those who have studied the meaning of the word "witness" will tell us here that the word means "one who can speak out of personal experience, one who could testify in court being a witness to an event, or one who has experienced that which is being talked about."

People who have been discipled and have a living, vital relationship with Jesus Christ will be dynamic witnesses both through their testimony and their life. I have found in the ministry that most people will listen to a personal testimony and treat it differently than the second-hand reports. When we share a personal faith in Christ and our relationship with him, others are attracted to what we believe.

The secret of carrying out the strategy and the dynamic of Acts 1:8 rests with the promise that Christ's followers have received the Holy Spirit and are endowed with his power. His power is dynamic within us. Remember the apostle Paul's words, "I can do anything through Christ who strengthens (or puts a dynamo in) me (Philippians 4:13). It's the energizing power of the Holy Spirit that pro-

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Reflecting God's Image in the Midst of Difficulty

Robin Copeland
Charlton, Mass.

OUR LIVES ARE bombarded by the burdensome struggles of worry, stress, and fear. We're sometimes anxious about something that may or may not happen. There is a seemingly endless strain over situations we just cannot control. The dark presence of danger, evil, or pain can grip us with fear. The spirit of unrest rages within our souls. Where can relief be found from these circumstances and difficulties?

God's precious promises of protection and of peace are found in his Word and in the presence of the Holy Spirit amidst troubles. There is a shelter of quiet rest from the internal strife caused by external pressures. Let's take a look.

God's provision and protection

As recorded in Scripture, God has evidenced his protection toward those he loves throughout history. God placed a distinguishing mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. Noah and his family were saved from God's total destruction. Although the Lord gave permission for Satan to test Job, God's protection would not allow the Devil to destroy his life. A ram was provided in substitution for the sacrifice of Isaac. Despite the jealousy of Joseph's brothers, God protected his life. Joseph's prosperity in Egypt brought provision of food to his people during famine in Canaan.

The Israelites were guided by a pillar of clouds or fire for forty years in the desert wilderness. When the Egyptians drew near, God hid the four million Israelites from view and later destroyed Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea. God's protective hand rested upon Daniel when he was dropped into the den of hungry lions. Rehab and her entire family were rescued from the total destruction of Jericho. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were kept from the scorching flames of a fiery furnace. The Lord gave Elijah refuge as he hid from Ahab. David, the anointed king, found safety from Saul's vengeful hand. The accounts are numerous.

> It is only when we give up our striving and be still that God's gentle words of peace can be heard.

King David writes in beautiful imagery about God's protection in Psalms. God is described as a shield, a fortress, and a stronghold for the warrior needing protection from the raging battle. We often feel tattered and threadbare from the battles of life. God is described as a refuge and hiding place for the escaped prisoner. We are often locked into our own prisons of bondage and guilt. God is a rock that is solid, faithful, and unchanging; while everything else is like the shifting sand. How often have you needed stability when life changes so quickly? We can find protection in the shadow of God's wings. The Psalms are saturated with images of a loving, protective God.

The greatest images of God's protection are revealed in two of the names given to God. He is our Father. He is strong, loving, and protective of his children. He also desires to give good gifts to those who ask. He is our Shepherd. The protective care of the Good Shepherd is reflected in the parable of the hundred sheep and the one who strays from the fold. We often focus on the one whom the Shepherd goes and finds, but think for a moment about the other ninety-nine. The Shepherd provided protection for them as well. Like a shepherd, God is protective of his sheep.

As we reflect on the actions, images, and names of God, we begin to grasp the vastness of his protection for us. A sense of trust in his loving care begins to rise above the restless-

ness. "Trust in him at all times. O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge" (Psalm 62:8). There must be the ability to trust God at all times. He is willing and capable of taking good care of us through every situation. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me" (John 14:1). A troubled heart is not the will of the Father. He wishes to have us trust in him in all circumstances. It is when we trust God that peace can be found.

God's perfect peace

What does peace mean? How is it related to understanding God's protection? Peace is the sense of total well-being and rest of spirit, in fellowship with God. It is resting in God's strength. Peace is not an emotion, but a fruit of the Spirit. It is different than a peace the world gives.

Like salvation, peace is a free gift of God. In salvation, we experience peace with God. We are no longer enemies of God, but sons of God. God's peace can flow in and through us as a result of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. In John 14:27, Jesus promises peace to his distressed disciples who are trying to deal with his announcement of leaving them. "My peace I leave with you. My peace I will give to you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." In Matthew 11:28-30, the Prince of Peace calls the weary and burdened to come to him. "I will give you rest." "You will find rest for your souls." Each of these passages speak of peace as something to be given by God. This can lead us to believe that peace is a gift available to the one who asks and receives it.

Peace springs forth once we come to the end of ourselves; sweet surrender. Trials and tribulations break us of our self-sufficiency and control. It is only when we give up our striving and be still that God's gentle words of peace can be heard. As we finally give up the battle for control and the need to understand, peace replaces the agony of our souls. We can look at our sufferings as a step toward total dependency on a protective God. Reaching beyond the pain and climbing like a child into the arms of the Father is all that we need.

How can real peace become a continual wellspring within your soul? Hebrews 4:9-11 states, "There remains then, a Sabbath rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience." Spending time thinking on God's protection and promises of peace and how it relates to real life can help us to enter God's Sabbath rest. Our effort should be to fix our eyes on the Good Shepherd. Let us stop striving to make ourselves acceptable to God. In humbleness and helplessness, we can confess our unrest and lay our burdens down. It is remarkable how quickly peace fills the vacuum. In the words of Henry Drummond, "The Christian's part in reflecting God is holding the mirror in place. As mirrors, when Christians point themselves to God, they will automatically reflect God's character."

Trust and surrender are the cornerstones to a temple of peace. We can trust God's faithfulness because of the testimonies to his protection in both the Old and New Testaments. His Son has promised peace in the person of the Holy Spirit. Surrender chases away worry, stress, and fear because God is in control. As trust and surrender grow in our hearts, peace springs up to replace our unrest. Cling to the One who so dearly loves you. ❑

Robin, a homemaker, resides in Charlton, Massachusetts, with her husband, Bob, and their three boys. The family attends Oak Hill Bible Church (Advent Christian) in Oxford where Bob serves as associate pastor. Robin enjoys cooking, reading, and traveling. She has learned the value of clinging to God's protection and peace through the long illness and eventual death of her first husband.

'Tis the Sound of the Trumpet!

He had walked an extra mile that day
To help a stricken brother.
He was weary and sick himself they say;
But he spent all his strength for another.
As they helped him to bed he said with a sigh,
"I have finished my race. I am ready to die."
Wait! What is that light that fills up the sky—
And that mighty sound? *'Tis the trumpet!*

She had cleaned and cooked for a lifetime it seemed,
For many depended upon her.
Now she had found rest for which she had dreamed
As she tried her Savior to honor.
They wrap her body in a shroud;
And their hearts are heavy and heads are bowed.
Then they hear a sound that is clear and loud
And *she* hears it, too! *'Tis the sound of the trumpet!*

There are bones in every valley and rill—
Dry bones of the saints long gone.
In every country—on every hill—
A sudden upheaval! 'Tis dawn!
And a loud clear sound is heard by the dead;
And the bones are enfleshed which were bare:
And the saints are joining their Lord in the air
At the mighty sound of the trumpet!

—Miriam Snow Priebe

Be Lord from page 7

song by Lanny Wolfe, *Jesus Be the Lord of All*. In fact, you may want to make it your own prayer, either for a first commitment to his Lordship, or a renewal of vows spoken long ago:

"I surrender it now, make my heart your throne
Rule all kingdoms great and small,
For if you're not Lord of everything
Then you're not Lord at all.
Jesus, be the Lord of all, Jesus be the Lord of all.
Jesus, I surrender all the kingdoms of my heart." ❑

David S. McCarthy is the author of nine books and numerous articles which have appeared in Christian publications. He currently serves as pastor of the Portsmouth, NH, Advent Christian Church.

The Challenge of Surrender

Bill O'Connor
Newberg, Ore.

IT'S DIFFICULT to give up. Some folk find it almost impossible to quit. That's as it should be. There really is something to be said for the motto, "It's always too soon to quit." Many people have lost out by giving up too soon. On the other hand, many folk have lost even more by hanging on too long. Battles have been won by hanging on; entire armies have been lost by not knowing when to surrender.

In terms of human life in general, holding out and holding on are vital activities. Success comes not only to those who wait, but to those who keep moving forward while they're waiting. In terms of the spiritual life in particular, holding on and holding out are disastrous if it is God who asks us to let go and give in.

Giving complete control to God

The Christian life is the life of surrender. What makes this life such a challenge is the human tendency to hang on, to refuse to quit. The two war against each other like waves crashing against a resistant shore. The waves strive to overflow the beach, the beach struggles to repel the waves. Such, unfortunately, is the type of ebb and flow that takes place in the life of a believer struggling over giving up to God. God is in control, then he isn't; spiritual life is on a high, then it's not; the Christian feels great, then he doesn't; there is thrilling spiritual victory, followed by agonizing spiritual defeat.

Many Christians, not having learned to surrender, live life on a gigantic spiritual roller coaster. They're up one minute, down the next; racing forward one second, plunging to the depths a moment later. Were they to chart their lives on a graph, they would find that the high points represent the moments when God has control. The low points on the chart are those times when they once more took life into their own hands. The pattern is plain to see, almost like the tracings of a seismic meter.

It seems an incredible imposition—to give ourselves, everything we are and everything we possess, to the Lord—but it becomes an indescribable blessing.

The answer to this up-and-down existence is simple—surrender. Yet it is difficult to do. We step off the roller coaster only when we give complete control of everything to God. We experience victory, in human terms, only when we accept defeat. The crashing of the waves against the shore ceases only when the shore agrees to become submerged in the sea.

Being submerged in the grace and mercy of God is not a difficult thing to experience, it is only a difficult idea to accept. It raises questions of security to which we don't have answers. Yet, when we take the risk, it results in the greatest security of all. The idea of giving in to God, and of giving life over to his will, generates a lot of discomfort. Actually doing so leads to spiritual rest such as the soul has never known.

The challenge of surrender

The Old Testament word for surrender is *consecration*. People, animals, objects and places in Bible times were consecrated to the Lord. The admonition to "consecrate yourselves" is frequently repeated throughout the Old Testament record. For instance: *"I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy"* (Leviticus 11:44, NIV). Or: *"Joshua told the people, 'Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you'"* (Joshua 3:5, NIV).

The New Testament word is *sanctify*, a word which signifies an act or a state by which, or in which, people or things are set apart for use by God. Through sanctification they are consecrated or "made sacred." That's the challenge of surrender: To give up everything we believe ourselves to be in order to become all that God intends for us to be in Christ. It seems an incredible imposition—to give ourselves, everything we are and everything we possess, to the Lord—but it becomes an indescribable blessing.

The apostle Paul offers this prayer for God's people: "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23, NIV). The first half of the verse speaks to the challenge of surrender. God cannot set us apart unless we are willing to give ourselves up to his will. The second half of the verse speaks of the awesome result when we are finally willing to give in to the Lord. We can't have the one without the other.

That's the tragedy of so many Christian lives; they're missing the fullness of God's blessing and power because they withhold themselves for themselves. It's not that God shuts anything off from us, we shut ourselves off from him. By failing to surrender, we deny ourselves the benefit of his complete control and total blessing.

It only makes sense to give up the lesser for the greater, but it's hard to do. We want to hold onto our rights. But God wants to teach us that, when we give up our rights, we will enjoy all the privileges of a child of God. We have a choice: like the prodigal, we can go our own way, do our own thing, and squander our resources; or, we can do God's thing, go his way, and have recourse to his unlimited resources. It is entirely our decision. The choice is either self or surrender.

Our plan or his?

God also wants to teach us that when we give up our plans, we become the beneficiaries of his divine plan for our lives. God has a plan for each of us. David says that the divine plan for each of our lives has been in place since long before we were born (Psalm 139:16). But God's plan is only fully active when we are fully consecrated and have surrendered to its outworking in our lives. If we choose to go our own way, God will not stop us. He will never force us into his paths.

It is only natural that we want to protect our rights, make our own plans, set our own course, determine our own destiny. God built those responses into us for the good of the human race and its survival. God also built into each of us the deeper spiritual need to live in peace and harmony with him. In the spiritual realm God invites us to give up our human rights and privileges in order to enjoy something even more wonderful: the fullness of God worked out in and through our lives as we live in surrender to his will.

God calls us to surrender ourselves and our rights to his control. This is one time in life when it doesn't pay to hold out or hold on. It is possible to win this battle and lose the victory. The challenge of surrender is to say no to our natural tendencies and to say yes to God, regardless of how deeply such a step seems to run against the grain. It

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Mission Prayer Partnership

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K N O W

November

During November, Advent Christians across Canada and the United States will join for a month of focused prayer for the work and ministry of the Advent Christian Church. We invite readers of our monthly Prayer Partnership column to join in praying for the specific person or ministry listed for each day.

1 Pray for healthy Advent Christian **congregations**.

2 Pray for **David Ross (Shirley)**, executive vice-president.

3 Pray for **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu**, missionaries in Memphis, Tennessee.

4 Pray for Advent Christian college and seminary **students**.

5 Pray for Advent Christian congregations in **India**.

6 Pray for the leadership of the Advent Christian Village—**J. Pomeroy Carter (Jerri)**, president.

7 Pray for **Robert Mayer (Renee)**, publications office.

8 Pray for regional superintendents: **Clinton Taber** (Eastern), **W. James Smith** (Western), **Marshall Tidwell** (Appalachian), **Larry Withrow** (Southern).

9 Pray for **Russell and Noelle Carle**, missionaries to New Zealand.

10 Pray for the leadership and staff at **Vernon Advent Christian Home**, **Lawrence Knowles**, administrator.

11 Pray for **Steve and Ann Lay**, **Karen Rigney**, **Floyd and Musa Powers**—missionaries to Japan.

12 Pray for the **WHFM National Board**—Beatrice Moore, president.

13 Pray for **Russell Giasson (Karalee)**—Department of Services.

14 Pray for **Glennon Balser (Betty)**—president of the Advent Christian General Conference.

15 Pray for **David Vignali**, **Warren and Ruth Prestidge**, and **Margaret Helms**—missionaries to the Philippines.

16 Pray for **Brent Carpenter (Glenda)**—Department of Church Relations.

17 Pray for the faculty and staff of the **Berkshire Institute for Christian Studies** (BICS)—**Stephen Brown (Lavonne)**, administrator.

18 Pray for **your pastoral family** _____.

19 Pray for National Youth Board Chairman **Chris Phillips (Kari)**.

20 Pray for the **Devasahayams**, **Devadassons**, and the **Devairakkams**—Advent Christian national missionaries to Malaysia.

21 Pray for **Berkshire Christian College** and the **Center for Advent Christian Studies, David A. Dean**, director; **Lee Welkley**, administrator.

22 Pray for **Carlos Quintero (Brenda)**, and **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez**—Advent Christian Mexico Mission.

23 Thank God for his abundance.

24 Pray for **A.U. Etuk, E.H. Ekperikpe, Amos Gbaa**—African national missionaries.

25 Pray for **Millie Griswold (Roland)**—Department of Resource Development.

26 Pray for **Dwight Carpenter (Ann)**—Student Ministries coordinator.

27 Pray for **Harold Patterson (Nancy)**—Department of World Missions.

28 Pray for the members of the Advent Christian **Executive Council**.

29 Pray for **Pastor Ho En**—national missionary to China.

30 Pray for **revival** throughout the Advent Christian Church.

Missionary continued from page 13

pelled the early church forward and empowers his church today.

The power of the Holy Spirit enables his servants to stand against the attack of Satan, to stand in superiority over evil spiritual forces, and to have boldness in the presentation of the gospel. Our missionaries and those of other mission groups report of experiences like those of Moses and his rod gaining victory over the magicians in Egypt, or of Philip's encounter with Simon of Samaria (see Acts 8:4-25). Our Lord has given his servants not only a strategy, but great power to meet and overcome those evil forces that they may encounter. This is how the Gospel rapidly spread in the first century. And, through the Spirit's power, the gospel is spreading in the world today.

The last recorded words of Jesus before he ascended to heaven were words that expressed his concern for lost humanity. Shouldn't we, his church, deeply share his concerns as well today? Oh, for more missionary churches! ❑

Harold Patterson is Director of World Missions for the Advent Christian General Conference.

Forgiveness continued from page 9

Abnormal behavior

Psychologists today would call David's actions *aberrant behavior*. In other words, David wasn't normally like that. He had diverted from his kind, decent, God-loving pattern of life. Does God then forgive such mishaps? Such diversion from the norm? You bet! He not only forgives them, but he forgets them. After repentance (a complete turning back to righteousness), God casts the sin-stained (aberrant behavior) into his "sea of forgetfulness."

Haven't we all done things we may refer to as "out of character?" Or we may have rationalized our behavior with, "I just wasn't myself at the time." Aren't we all in need of forgiveness?

Further in his book, Purnell wrote, "You can't erase the past—but you don't need to be a victim of it. You can find forgiveness for your past and its pains.

"Nor are you chained to your present patterns of behavior which threaten to drag you through the mud again and again. You can stop the process. You can turn this area of your life around. You can replace that hurtful behavior with productive behavior."

What punishment then?

Certainly, punishment should be meted out. But what type of punishment? *Not forgetting the pain of the victim in any way*, but what about consideration for the individual circumstance of the crime and the psychological state of the perpetrator? Shouldn't we do that as well? The damage has been done and can't be undone. It is in the past. I don't mean to be cold and impersonal to the victim(s), yet, personally, I don't see this "lock 'em up and throw away the key" concept as morally correct—especially for Christians. When Purnell says we can become productive again, he's considering the fact that we'll be given a second chance. Proverbs 28:13 (TLB) says, "A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful. But if he confesses and forsakes them, he gets another chance."

As a prison chaplain I've noted that the repentant person wishes there had been no victim. Each perpetrator who has repented desires to erase his/her acts against innocent victims, but of course, can't. Yet, for many there can be some restitution—oh, it won't erase the crime, but it could produce some type of "payment" to society, in some cases to the victim or victim's family.

I'll admit, there are no easy answers, but we can't give up trying to find something that will work better. *Forgiveness* is the key. ❑

Veteran Advent Christian Pastor Roy Morrison serves as senior chaplain of Baker Correctional Institution in Olustee, Florida.

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are a gift of God? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever.

—Thomas Jefferson

Last July 4, Czech President Vaclav Havel gave a speech at Independence Hall in Philadelphia. He cited Thomas Jefferson's assurance, quoted above, as his: "Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God?" The next day the *Wall Street Journal* suggested in an editorial that, if the public school teachers in this nation were to teach or discuss such sentiments in their classrooms, they would be in jeopardy of losing their jobs.

—Robert Dugan

PBS film critic Michael Medved assailed the twisted logic of TV executives who scoff at the notion that television's increasing violence and sexual flagrance have little impact on viewer's actions. Said Medved, "Don't they see the inconsistency in arguing that a thirty-second commercial for floor polish will change people's behavior at the supermarket and then turning around and saying that a 30-minute program showing violence and rape and horror has no influence on people's behavior?"

—Charles Colson

A long time ago I discovered that some folk take their politics far more seriously than they do their spirituality. That's OK, I guess, if they would like to spend eternity in Congress.

— Harold Bales

God sat in silence while the sins of the world were placed upon his Son. Was it right? No. Was it fair? No. Was it love? Yes. In a world of injustice God once and for all tipped the scales in the favor of hope.

—Max Lucado

All Christian doctrine and affirmation must be obedient to the witness of the Bible; that is, we are to test our doctrines and our lives by the faithful witness to Jesus Christ which is what the Bible is: the Old Testament is anticipation and the New Testament is fulfillment.

—Earl Palmer

You can become a Christian by going to church just about as easily as you can become an automobile by sleeping in a car.

—Garrison Keillor quoted in *The Other Side*

But most of us live by smaller hopes than the Kingdom of God. We hope our children will be safe and successful. We hope that our spouse's cancer will go into remission. We hope that our pension funds are sound. Hopes for this life, this place, this time—these are the hopes that propel our daily lives.

What does God promise for these hopes? He promises one thing: that he will be present with us and will sustain us as we walk into a tomorrow we can imagine but cannot control. He does not promise that all our hopes will come true. He promises to be with us whether they come true or not.

— Lewis Smedes

Sources: Thomas Jefferson quoted by Robert Dugan at the 1995 National Association of Evangelicals annual convention. Charles Colson quoted from *Breakpoint*. Earl Palmer quoted from *Salvation by Surprise* (Word Books, 1975). Harold Bales quoted from the *Charlotte Observer*. Max Lucado from *When God Whispers Your Name* (Word Books, 1994). Garrison Keillor quoted from *The Other Side*. Lewis Smedes quoted from *Fuller Focus* (Spring 1995).

Surrender

continued from page 17

seems impossible to do, but God never asks us to do something that we cannot. His Spirit is present in us, and working through us, to make the impossible a reality.

Surrender is as difficult as letting go of everything you've got. It is as simple as accepting all that God has for you. Seen in that light, it makes perfect sense. We give up what we possess to receive the abundance that God has in store for us. We set aside what we can do—which is little—to receive what the Almighty can do—which is everything. We surrender our pitiful supply of human resources in order to be gifted with his inexhaustible treasures of grace and power.

Seen from the other side of the coin, surrender is the most logical choice in the world. Try it once and you'll be convinced, for God always gives far more than he asks. The gains outweigh the losses as a mountain of iron outweighs a feather. Anyone who accepts the challenge of surrender will never regret the decision. ❑

Bill O'Connor of Newburg, Oregon, has thirty years of ministry experience, having served six churches as minister of education, minister of youth, and senior pastor.

Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
891 Queen St. #60
Southington, CT 06489

Marion Damon (March 27)
891 Queen St. #60
Southington, CT 06489

Beryl Joy Hollis (December 16)
Contact missions office.

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Warren Prestidge
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-794-62-8744

Karen Rigney (June 5)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-794-62-8744

Floyd and Musa Powers
(October 8 and February 28)
15-3 1 Chome Higashi Fujie
Akashi Shi, Hyogoken 673
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-078-925-3416

Margaret Helms (September 18)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
Buduburam Refugee Camp
National Mobilization Program
Box 46
Accra, GHANA

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

Liberia and China
Our pastor in China
(September 30 and October 26)
All correspondence should be channelled through the missions office.

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devasahayam
Beulah Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Rev. T. and Victoria Devairakkam
33, Jalan Intan 4/1
Taman Intan,
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Mexico

Carlos Quintero
387 W. Poppyfields Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
(818) 791-2447

Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Carlos Quintero

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Vice-president
Harold Patterson; World Missions
Millie Griswold; Resource Development

P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

Russell Giasson; Services
Robert Mayer; Publications
Brent Carpenter; Church Relations

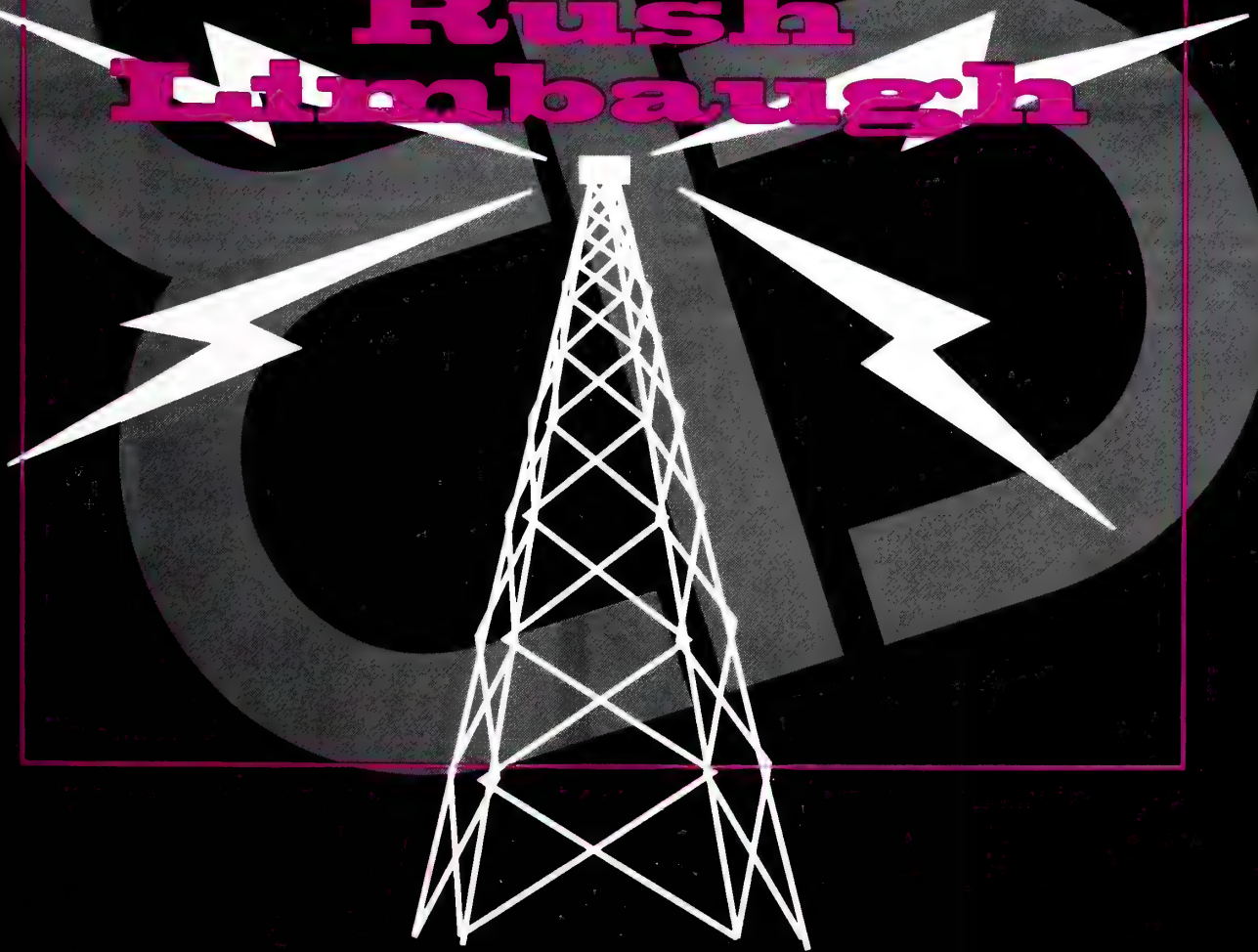
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Advent Christian
WITNESS

November 1995

What Jesus would say to Rush Limbaugh



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He's controversial and opinionated. And millions of people listen to him every day. What would Jesus say to Rush Limbaugh? Former *Chicago Tribune* writer turned pastor, Lee Strobel, suggests some surprising answers.

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Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy,**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria

Addendum

In the article *What Jesus Would Say to Rush Limbaugh,* we omitted the biographical sketch and article credit that should have appeared at the end of the article.

Lee Strobel serves on the pastoral staff at Willow Creek Community Church in S. Barrington, Ill. His article is taken from *What Jesus Would say to: Rush Limbaugh, Madonna, Bill Clinton, Michael Jordan, Bart Simpson, Donald Trump, Murphy Brown, Madalyn Murray O'Hair, Mother Teresa, David Letterman, and You!* Copyright 1994 by Lee Strobel and used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.

We apologize for our error.



Is Rush Really Right?

I LOVE humor. There's nothing like a good joke to make a tough day brighter or a difficult circumstance easier to bear. I'm convinced that laughter is not only good medicine for the soul but at times a gift from God that helps us see our problems and struggles from a realistic viewpoint. But let me confess that my taste in humor has always had an irreverent side. If there's anything that gets my dander up, it's politicians, public officials, and special interests who take themselves and their causes far too seriously. There's nothing like a little irreverent humor to put them in their proper place.

How ironic that as you listen to Rush, you can feel alienated, angry, and entertained all at the same time.

While political satire has a rich and varied tradition in the twentieth century, during the 1990s it's been dominated by one individual: Rush Limbaugh. Whatever you think of his political leanings, there's no doubt that Mr. Limbaugh is articulate, funny, highly controversial, and very popular. What's behind the dramatic rise of Rush Limbaugh? Two things. First, Mr. Limbaugh has mastered radio communication in a way that no other political commentator or satirist has ever done. And he has tapped into a large segment of the American populace who have long felt that their ideas and viewpoints were not taken seriously by the cultural elites that dominate our universities, legal profession, media, and government. Mr. Limbaugh blends humor and political commentary in a way that articulates the frustration many Americans feel with these institutions. And he does it in an entertaining way.

And that gets at an important reason why I think we as Christians need to be careful and critical when listening to Rush Limbaugh (or to any commentator for that matter). In the last twenty years, our society has developed what David Mains calls an entertainment addiction. In other words, we view most events and issues, no matter how serious or complex they are, through the lens of show business. All serious matters are reduced to brief television sound bites or radio monologues. Even newspapers have gotten into the act. Next time you get your morning paper, notice that the portion devoted to news and opinion is significantly smaller than that devoted to entertainment and advertising.

It's at this point that Rush Limbaugh is more like Peter Jennings, Dan Rather, and Diane Sawyer than he would care to admit. Even though his political views are significantly more conservative than his fellow journalist/entertainers at the networks, Rush Limbaugh reinforces our desire to see everything through the lens of entertainment and show business. How ironic that as you listen to Rush, you can feel alienated, angry, and entertained all at the same time.

As Christians, we recognize that humor and satire have their place. A healthy sense of humor helps us not to take ourselves too seriously. But Christians must recognize the danger of reducing serious matters to the level of entertainment. When that happens, we can wind up unconsciously believing that our faith makes no difference in life or that change is not possible. But at the heart of the good news is the fact that God can transform circumstances, even big ones, and that Jesus Christ can change lives.

I still listen to Rush, but not as much as I used to. There are some issues where I think he is on target. For example, his pro-life perspective on abortion is one of the best I've ever heard. There are other areas where he oversimplifies and doesn't consider all the facts. That's true with all commentators, myself included. But the trend that Rush Limbaugh and others like him in the media exemplify—the reduction of serious issues to the level of mere entertainment—is something that should concern all of us who are passionately committed to the cause of Jesus Christ. ❑



AP/Wide World Photos

What Jesus Would Say to Rush Limbaugh

Lee Strobel
S. Barrington, Ill.

GREETINGS, conversationalists across the fruited plain, this is Rush Limbaugh, the most dangerous man in America, serving humanity simply by opening my mouth, destined for my own wing in the Museum of Broadcasting, executing everything I do flawlessly with zero mistakes, doing this show with half my brain tied behind my back just to make it fair, because I have talent on loan from God. Rush Limbaugh. A man. A legend. A way of life.

So begins another radio broadcast of the country's most controversial—and unlikely—political commentator. The product of a small Missouri River town, a college dropout who flunked Speech 101 and was fired from a half dozen radio jobs, a twice-divorced proclaimer of family values, a promoter of patriotism who didn't register to vote until he was thirty-five, Limbaugh has become a force so powerful that some industry insiders have credited him with single-handedly resuscitating AM radio.

His product is simple: It's Rush Hudson Limbaugh III, *sans* script, sitting alone at a microphone or staring into a camera, enthusiastically and often humorously prescribing a conservative cure for what's ailing America.

And who is Rush Limbaugh? That, of course, depends on who you ask. As for himself, Limbaugh claims to be "just a harmless little fuzz ball."

But talk show host Larry King judges him guilty of "gay-bashing, bashing women, bashing blacks." Humorist Erma Bombeck has called him "Rush Slimebaugh." ABC's Jeff Greenfield thinks he's "very funny." Brian Keliher, who publishes the *Flush Rush Quarterly*, fears that he's a "god-like creature" to his fans. *Vanity Fair* called him the "patron saint of white male chauvinists." Says *Nightline's* Ted Koppel: "He's very smart. He does his homework."

To *Newsweek*, he's "the American White Male under siege, coping with femi-Nazis, dolphin huggers, 'wacko' environmentalists and closet 'socialists' such as Bill Clinton." *Playboy* painted him as being "William F. Buckley without the thesaurus; Pat Buchanan without the mean-spiritedness; Ross Perot without the paranoia." Ronald Reagan gave him the ultimate Republican salute by calling him "the number one voice for conservatism in our country."

So who is he, *really*? What is he saying that has so many people listening? And what, in the end, might Jesus have to say to him?

The Rushian gospel

Limbaugh traces his conservative outlook to his late father, a successful lawyer who "told you what he believed full brunt force, right between the eyes." His dad would spend hours regaling young Rush and his friends with his colorful commentary on politics and ethics. And his father, who taught Sunday school and directed the choir at a United Methodist

Church, also gave Limbaugh the religious training that has helped shape his outlook.

"It (religion) caused us to believe in family values," Limbaugh's brother, David, told Michael Arkush for the biography, *Rush!* "My dad used to say morality descends from God, that human beings wouldn't have a moral code it if didn't come from God, and we'd live in a state of anarchy. We don't believe in moral relativism, secular humanism; we believe in God and immutable laws, the primacy of the human species. From that flow a lot of his political views."

Limbaugh's popularity among fundamentalist and evangelical Christians—by one estimate, twenty to twenty-five percent of his audience—stems in part from the way he uses biblical themes to advance his brand of conservatism. He refers to God on a regular basis and even quotes the Bible from time to time.

"There is not a day that goes by that I do not think about the existence of God and what it means and where we came from," Limbaugh told *The Door* in an interview. He said that he has a personal faith in Christ, adding: "Jesus holds the answers to all of the everyday problems that you face. I'm talking about an acceptance and belief in Jesus, heaven, and God."

Limbaugh stresses the benefits to society of following God's moral standards, and while those benefits are great, the only way America will ever *really* be transformed is when individuals, one by one, open themselves to the life-changing power of Jesus Christ.

Many of his views are firmly rooted in Scripture. For instance, he believes that because God created human life, it's sacred and therefore abortion and euthanasia are wrong; that because people were made in God's image, they're fundamentally different and more valuable than animals—that God gave people dominion over the planet. Limbaugh believes that God established the family, and therefore it needs to be kept strong by society; that God's laws concerning sexuality and morality are unchanging and still applicable today; and that everybody should be held personally responsible for their actions. He believes that the country's Judeo-Christian heritage should be nurtured, and that the First Amendment wasn't intended to protect people *from* religion but to protect religious people from government interference.

As far as all of this goes, how could any Bible-believing Christian disagree? Jesus would certainly applaud these particular values as being consistent with the teachings of Scripture, wouldn't he?

But Dr. Daniel J. Evearitt, a specialist in religion and popular culture at Toccoa Falls College in Georgia, raises some cautions about Limbaugh's overall approach. "The 'gospel' that Rush Limbaugh preaches," he said, "is heavy on the societal implications of religion and light on a theology of personal redemption."

In other words, Limbaugh stresses the benefits to society of following God's moral standards, and while those benefits are great, the only way America will ever *really* be transformed is when individuals, one by one, open themselves to the life-changing power of Jesus Christ.

"He appears to be vastly more interested in renewing and redeeming society than in personal salvation," wrote Evearitt in his book *Rush Limbaugh and the Bible.* "Important as our religious roots and belief in God are, standing alone they are insufficient to remedy man's malady. The fundamental issue of human sin must be dealt with on an individual basis by repentance for sin and acceptance of salvation through Jesus Christ."

It's that ugly tendency toward personal sin—selfishness, indifference, self-indulgence, animosity toward others—that's actually at the root of the social issues that Limbaugh seeks to address through political means. Jesus' agenda is to relentlessly but lovingly focus on our sin problem because that's the striking point that keeps us from enjoying community with him and each other.

Christ's emphasis, then, is on a *spiritual* kingdom at this point, not a political one, so he probably wouldn't engage Limbaugh in a debate over the intricacies of NATO or NAFTA. After all, well-meaning Christians can disagree over how biblical values get translated into specific governmental policies, which is why it's dangerous and misleading for any political persuasion to claim Christ's exclusive endorsement.

But there would still be plenty for Jesus to talk over with Limbaugh—and, as we know, Limbaugh is seldom without words himself.

Jesus talks with Rush

Rush Limbaugh has dined with world leaders, slept in the White House, and hobnobbed with celebrities. But an eyeball-to-eyeball rendezvous with Jesus Christ—well, *that* would certainly be a fascinating encounter!

Jesus would probably establish pretty quickly that he's not just another "dittohead," which is Limbaugh's term for those whose views are in such absolute sync with his that they automatically say "ditto" to his every pronouncement. Even so, I think Jesus would be, in characteristic fashion, both affirming as well as challenging.

"Rush," I could imagine him saying, "A lot of your values are like a page out of my own book, and I'm very pleased by that. In a day when America's airwaves feature more filth than faith, it's refreshing when my name receives respect instead of rebuke. So, Rush, let me encourage you—whenever you look to me and my teachings for guidance, you're looking in the right direction."

But then I think there are two areas Jesus would want to discuss with Limbaugh—*what* he's commu-

nicating as well as *how* he's communicating. You see, *both* are important to God. "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal," wrote the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1.

To Jesus, unless we're motivated by love—the kind of love a Christ-revolutionized heart, over time, expresses more and more—then whatever we say or do lacks real merit or meaning. Now *that's* challenging, isn't it?

To Jesus, unless we're motivated by love, then whatever we say or do lacks real merit or meaning.

Jesus might say, "Rush, let's talk for a few moments about the way in which you speak to your listeners—both your attitude and your approach. The Bible can provide you with some guidance in Ephesians 4:15, where it basically says this: Speak the truth, but do it in love."

The wedding of truth and love

There are many great truths of God that America desperately needs to hear and to respond to. But the way in which they're communicated can either challenge and motivate or alienate and divide. Unfortunately, Limbaugh's style has often ended up unnecessarily driving wedges between people.

Although Limbaugh claims to be presenting the truth about America—"The views expressed on this show have been documented to be correct 97.7 percent of the time"—Limbaugh actually takes a caricature approach to politics.

He essentially paints "liberals" as always having bad motives and never being right and "conservatives" as always having good motives and never being wrong. He gives every benefit of the doubt to conservatives while reading sinister intentions into virtually every position others take. For instance, he criticizes Vice President Al Gore for flip-flopping on abortion, while he naively accepts former President George Bush's claim that politics played no role in his own reversal on the issue. And Limbaugh often wildly exaggerates his opponents' positions—such as when he said that if the Democrats were in power during the first century, they would probably "demand" that Mary have an abortion because Jesus was "an unwanted pregnancy."

The result of Limbaugh's approach is the creation of a simplistic and unrealistic "good guys versus bad guys" mentality that short-circuits meaningful discussion and precludes constructive compromises.

He also polarizes people along gender lines. While denying he's sexist, Limbaugh repeatedly makes degrading, off-color remarks about women. He says he likes the women's movement—"especially when viewed from behind." He has referred to two feminists as "a couple of ugly dogs" and said the feminist movement is led by women who "can't get a man, and their rage is one long PMS attack." At one point he even refused to accept phone calls from women unless they first sent him their photo.

His use of volatile terms like "femi-Nazis" merely inflames emotions and pushes people away. I've met Limbaugh supporters who use that word like a weapon to wound any woman who asserts her legitimate rights. Limbaugh insists the term applies to only the most radical, man-hating feminists, such as those "to whom the most important thing in life is seeing to it that every abortion possible happens." But how many American women are like that? Limbaugh admits there are only twenty or so, yet his frequent use of the term has spurred some of his followers to wield it indiscriminately.

The sad truth is that it's much easier for all of us to dismiss and trivialize others after we label and then relegate them to an undesirable category.

In his book *The Way Things Ought to Be*, Limbaugh wrote: "Real problems deserve real solutions, not name-calling." Now that sounds like a positive position—except that it's defeated four sentences later when he calls advocates for the poor "poverty pimps."

The sad truth is that it's much easier for all of us to dismiss and trivialize others after we label and then relegate them to an undesirable category. At least, I've found that's true in my life. I'm much more apt to disregard or devalue people after I mentally put them into the "troublemaker" or "unimportant" or "different" classification. Once I've done that, it's a small step to say I have no moral responsibility toward them.

The cure, I've learned, is to keep reminding myself over and over that each person—regardless of his or her politics, philosophy, or personality—has intrinsic worth as an image-bearer of God. Simply put, they matter to him, so they should matter to me.

Overall, there's no question that Limbaugh raises some important topics. But they cry out for a balanced Christian perspective—and that means truthfully addressing the issues without denigrating others through vulgarities, stereotypes, or unfair and simplistic characterizations.

"That," Jesus might say to Limbaugh, "is part of what it means to speak the truth in love."

Bastion of noncompassion?

Another test of whether we're speaking the truth in love is how and what we communicate about the disenfranchised members of society. Jesus was a friend to the poor and the sick, caring about them and treating them with dignity and respect. And he might say to Limbaugh, "As I've poured out my compassion on you, I want you to express it to those who are in need. As

Proverbs 14:31 says, 'Whoever is kind to the needy honors God.'"

The poor are a frequent subject of Limbaugh's commentaries. He has criticized liberals for loudly declaring compassion toward the homeless and other people in need, but then prescribing misguided governmental remedies that merely worsen the problem. In the end, he says, that kind of empty sympathy doesn't really benefit anybody.

Limbaugh's approach would be to help the poor overcome their dependence on the government and work toward self-reliance wherever possible—laudable goals which, if achieved, would certainly improve their lifestyle. "You people should understand that I am not some bastion of noncompassion, without any concern for my fellow man," Limbaugh wrote in *The Way Things Ought to Be.*

While much of his critique of the homeless situation and proposals for helping the poor make sense, some of Limbaugh's remarks have called his attitude into question. He seems to view the problems of the poor as a societal issue, divorced from the reality that these are real people who are hurting and who need compassion and love as much as they need political proposals for improving their lot.

Jesus might remind Limbaugh of this chilling warning found in Proverbs 17:5: "He who mocks the poor shows contempt for their maker."

To Jesus our attitude toward the needy really matters. In fact, he might remind Limbaugh of this chilling warning found in Proverbs 17:5: "He who mocks the poor shows contempt for their maker."

In other words, God is insulted when anyone belittles his handiwork—and the poor are etched with his likeness every bit as much as the wealthy. Christ demonstrated compassion for the disenfranchised members of society through both word *and* deed, through both truth *and* love. That's the pattern he challenges his people to follow.

Jesus also said that the way we treat the sick in society is the way we're treating him. "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matt. 25:40).

And yet during a two-week period, Limbaugh featured an "AIDS Update," using Dionne Warwick's song, "I'll Never Love This Way Again" as one of the theme songs. By Limbaugh's own admission, these updates "ended up making fun of people who were dying long, painful, and excruciating deaths."

To his credit he later apologized, saying that "it was a totally irresponsible thing to do." But in the meantime his parodies fueled the prejudice suffered by many AIDS patients.

Now, nobody can claim a perfect record of being a consistent ambassador of Christ's compassion. As for me, I'm glad the times that I've been insensitive—and, I regret to say, there have been many—haven't been broadcast to twenty million listeners.

But that's the point: Limbaugh sets the tone for multitudes of listeners. He has a rare platform to propose meaningful societal reforms for helping the needy and at the same time inspire his listeners to take personal and sacrificial steps to serve them in love. It's too easy—and too offensive to God—to merely debate them as a political topic.

On an individual level, the real issue is how we respond when we realize we've been cold-blooded in our approach and attitude. Do we offer a surface-level apology without changing our conduct, risking the buildup of calluses on our hearts? Or do we seek Christ's forgiveness and ask him to help us see his face when we look at the needy?

"Rush, you've been courageous several times by admitting that you've been insensitive," Jesus might say. "That shows character, and I want you to know that my forgiveness is always available to you. And what's more, I'll be there to help you communicate compassionately about the homeless and the sick. When you think about them, consider this: I loved them enough to die for them."

Says Proverbs 31:8-9: "Speak up for those who cannot speak up for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

Taking aim at Amy

As the credits rolled across the screen at the end of one of Limbaugh's TV programs, alert viewers spotted the name of a new head writer: Bill Clinton.

It was a joke, of course, but also an acknowledgment that Clinton's administration has provided a mother lode of material for Limbaugh. Some predicted Limbaugh's popularity would fizzle once Clinton took office; instead it has sizzled.

Certainly there's nothing wrong in a democracy with critiquing and even satirizing the powers that be. But while almost anything goes under the First Amendment, I think Jesus would remind Limbaugh that, spiritually speaking, there's a line of disrespect that his followers shouldn't cross.

Truth—even hard truth, compellingly presented and passionately defended—needs to be tempered by love and respect.

"This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing," the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 13:6-7. "Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if *respect* then *respect*; if *honor*, then *honor*.

In addition, 1 Timothy 2:1-2 calls on Christians to pray for "all those in authority," while Titus 3 forbids the slandering of those in government.

The problem is that Limbaugh poisons the pond of public debate when he slips from legitimate discussion of public issues to personal at-

tacks by making fun of the appearance, speech, and even the physical size of his political foes.

For instance, instead of sticking to an analysis of Jimmy Carter's actions as president, he stooped to declaring that Carter's daughter, Amy, was the ugliest presidential daughter ever. On his TV show, while showing a videotape of a government official giving a speech, he frequently mocks their mannerisms, personal style, or the way they pronounce certain words. While he can be funny, the humor comes at a cost.

"As a conservative he advocates respect for authority," said Evearitt, "but when he ridicules elected officials he undercuts that very authority."

What's more, he undercuts his credibility as a Christian when he encourages his viewers to reduce political debate to below-the-belt blows. "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities," the Bible says in Titus 3:1-2, "to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men."

Truth—even hard truth, compellingly presented and passionately defended—needs to be tempered by love and respect.

Talent on loan from God

Finally, after discussing the need to speak the truth in a respectful and loving way, Jesus might turn to one of the most often quoted assertions that Limbaugh makes about himself: "I have talent on loan from God."

Although Limbaugh makes this claim with a self-congratulatory arrogance and puffed-up self-confidence, that might be overlooked as just being part of his comedy shtick and show biz persona. In fact, Limbaugh's friends describe him as being humble, gentle, and even painfully insecure when the microphone and TV lights click off.

But what about the claim itself? After all, Jesus would know for sure—*does* he have talent loaned from God?

"Rush, you're not exaggerating—God *has* given you talent, and a lot of it," Jesus would say. "But you need to know this: you're responsible for developing it and maximizing its impact."

You see, in addition to the fact that all human ability is a divine gift, 1 Corinthians 12:7 teaches that God loans a special species of talent to every one of his followers as a way of helping "the common good."

The biblical term for this is a "spiritual gift," a God-given ability to serve his kingdom in a way that transcends natural capabilities. Some have a gift of evangelism, others mercy, still others, administration, teaching, leadership, or various other gifts. It's through the interconnected use of these talents that God advances his church, and through his church, he grows his kingdom in the world.

But here's the snag: according to *U.S. News & World Report*, Limbaugh seldom attends church. And he isn't the only one who spends Sundays doing something else. Studies have shown that unchurched people almost unanimously believe that they can be good Christians independent of any religious institution, apparently subscribing to the cliche that they can worship God better while walking in the woods than sitting inside a building. And here's what's truly amazing: Two-thirds of *churchgoing* people agree!

Even so, the Bible doesn't envision—much less endorse—the idea of Lone Ranger Christians. Hebrews 10:25 is unambiguous: "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing."

In the New Testament, active membership in a church is assumed. Actually the Bible describes two kinds of church members. People become "positional members" of Christ's universal church when they make the decision to follow him. Then the Bible invariably shows these Christians becoming "participating members" in a local body of believers.

Spiritual free agents

When we choose instead to act as spiritual free agents, we're cheating ourselves. The church is where we can grow deeper in our faith; increase our understanding of Scripture; offer thanks and worship to God; further develop a Christ-honoring worldview; encourage, challenge, and care for each other; and strategically infiltrate the world with Christ's love and compassion. Apart from the church's consistent influence, it's too easy for our faith to atrophy and for us to fall prey to distorted teachings and hardened attitudes.

But there's another angle that's often overlooked: when we stay away, we're also cheating the church. God has loaned us talent for a purpose, and when we withhold it from what Jesus considers the most important and revolutionary institution in the world—which he lovingly refers to as his "bride"—we're robbing his kingdom.

What about you? Are you part of the problem of the church's declining influence in our society, or part of the solution? It may take some work to find the specific church that God wants for you, but it's worth the effort and commitment to make the search and then get involved.

Now, admittedly, many churches are bogged down in mediocrity and irrelevancy. I once vowed that I'd never get involved in a church because I thought I'd end up sitting on some mind-numbing committee that would haggle for months over what color the hymnal covers ought to be.

But when I got a taste of a ministry that has a dynamic, strategic, God-directed vision for impacting lives, and which offers a deep sense of community where people really care about each other, I couldn't get enough of it. I knew that whatever I invested there would yield monumental dividends that would never fade. And believe

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Mexíco Díary

Editor's Note: For the past several years, Advent Christian congregations have been organizing short-term missions trips to Mexico. While there the participants help with construction projects and organize Vacation Bible Schools and other valuable ministries. Eleanor Chew from the Attleboro, Massachusetts Advent Christian Church, had the opportunity to participate in a short-term trip to the Baja California peninsula of Mexico. Here are excerpts from her diary that focus not only on the trip itself, but what the Lord taught her through the experience.

Eleanor Chew
Holbrook, Mass.

December 1994: My application for the Mexico mission team has arrived from Frank Jewett from Oxford, Maine. The start is finally here.

February 1995: I have written my appeal letters to raise support. I've also put them in our church bulletins. Also mailed fifty to people outside the church. Hope people will respond to my letter. Responses are starting to come. Thank you Lord.

Sunday, April 23: My congregation, Attleboro, Mass., Advent Christian Church, commissions me during the morning service. Pastor Russell Carle and Ray Cobb, the chairman of our diaconate, pray for my trip to Mexico. Also a special service in Oxford to commission our team. In Oxford we sang songs in Spanish, introduced ourselves, and told people about our plans for ministry in Mexico. I'm on VBS team.

Saturday, April 29: We leave today from Portland, Maine, airport. I arrived before the rest of the team and met three people waiting for the team. Took a while to check in twenty people and all their gear. On plane one passenger wanted to know where our group was going. I told him we were going to Mexico to work at a Christian hospital and to teach people about God's love for them. He was impressed and wished us good luck.

Sunday, April 30: Up early to start for Mexicali before it gets too hot on the roads. Ride was beautiful—the scenery kept changing from mountains, to desert, to mountains again. Rocks in the desert were high and piled on top of each other in interesting ways that man could not have done. Rocks were very white from the wind and sand. Stopped at Crucifixion Thorn in desert to see bushes. The thorns were four to five inches long with extremely sharp points. Thorns are believed to be similar to the thorns used in Jesus' crown. What pain Christ must have endured from them. Sure gives more meaning to his crucifixion.

Made it through the U.S.-Mexico border without either van being stopped—a miracle according to Craig and Frank. Hot in Mexicali when we arrived. Oops, the food that Frank bought is gone so we ran out to get food at the store to make lunch with. Seems someone thought it was leftover from the previous group and gave it to the people in the community as is their practice. At least someone is using it who needs it. Watched a soccer game on field next to complex—they take soccer seriously in Mexico.

Went to church with Luis, a friend of Mexican Medical Mission, and people at his church were thrilled to see us. One lady told us someone came who hadn't come in a long time, someone new came, and when we came she thought she was in heaven. She is crying as she tells us this. They taught us several songs after the ser-

vice and were patient with our lack of Spanish.

Facilities at hospital site are basic for there—latrines, an outdoor shower, women's dorm has bunks without mattresses, men's dorm has no bunks or mattresses.

Monday, May 1: Scenery is beautiful as the mountains behind us change colors. Our first day of work was productive and everyone worked as a team doing whatever needed to be done. Excited to see results right away from our work. We sheetrocked a supply area, plastered walls and ceiling in the workroom, laid out the perimeter, and hauled dirt to level the new area for the hospital extension.

> Thoughts of leaving bring tears to my eyes—so many needs here. Deep down I know we have accomplished so much.

At VBS, we had twenty people, both children and adults. Played games, sang songs, did a skit, told a story, and did a craft. Did VBS on the side of the road. Frank Jewett prayed with the group for Lupe, a Christian who was suffering from a bad headache. Everyone was excited we were there. People translated for us.

Clinic serves 450 people a month who would not otherwise have medical or dental care. Hospital has all the facilities we have in the U.S. only on a smaller scale. Buildings don't look like much but the workers are making a real difference.

During devotions the teens acknowledged the support adults can be with their knowledge. Adults recognized the teens' hard work. Luis thanked us for being there and talked about how the love of God is the same no matter where you are. Teens are great. God blessed us with an enthusiastic, hardworking group.

Tuesday, May 2: Another great work day. Continued working on projects we began yesterday and readied cookhouse for lumber delivery. Lumber never came even though they promised it to us by 11:00. This is discouraging especially to guys who really want to work on the cookhouse. Teen girls tiled a shower in the hospital bringing hospital one step closer to certification. VBS at church site as church has not been built. Same format as yesterday. Lupe's headache was gone shortly after Frank prayed for her. Thank you Lord for this testimony of your power and love. I explained the story of the Good Samaritan after the skit, telling the children of God's love for them and that we were there to show them God's love.

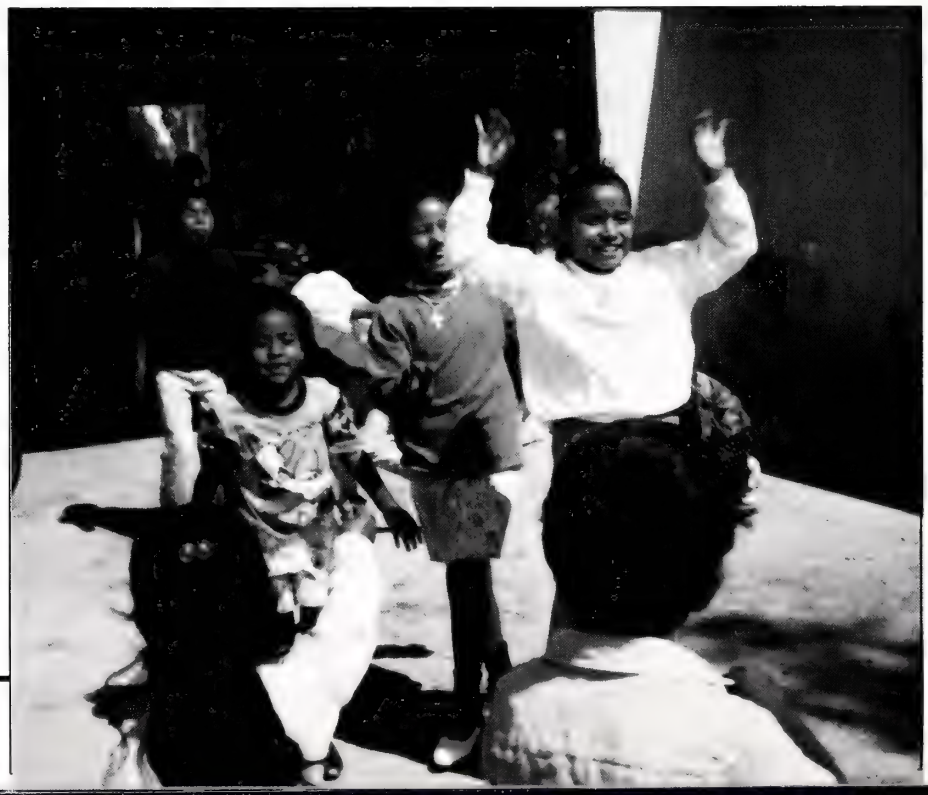
Lupe showed me her house. Her house is two rooms, both of which are very small. First room has door and windows, back room has no door or roof. That allows all the flies and mosquitoes in the house. Only furniture was a couch, two foam mattresses with a couple of blankets on them, a bureau without drawers, a small table, and three wooden chairs. No refrigerator, cabinets, food, or clothes were visible. House is full of flies in the middle of the afternoon. Ten people live here. Lupe is pleased that I tell her that her house is "bien," (good).

At VBS site, Guillermo interprets for me as I asked Lupe if she had Jesus in her heart. She said "yes" and told me the pastor and the church helped her build her house. I asked her what she lived in before and she told me her house was made of blankets. Everything she had God has given her. What happiness the Mexican Christians have even with the poor existence and almost no basic necessities to live on.

Many people are coming into clinic tonight. Walked to store up the street for soda. Pepsi, Coke, and Mexican soft drinks are sold. Carbonated apple juice is a hit with the teens. I think I'll pass up this drink. Soda is 40¢ for a 16 oz. bottle. Big volleyball game tonight with a soccer ball as there's no volleyball. Pamela, the doctor, is nice and you can tell she loves the people who come to the clinic.

Building supplies cost us more than we expected. Windshield on van is cracked—no one knows what happened. Not sure insurance will cover the damage. Sunset is beautiful. Devotions—we shared what God had taught us. Members were impressed by the love of the Mexican people and the importance they place on family.

Wednesday, May 3: Continued working on same projects and fixed electrical outlets in surgical suites. Also fixed doors to surgical



suite and painted storeroom. Lumber finally arrived but half the load was no good and had to be refused. Praise God that Craig and Guillermo were there. We would not have gotten away with refusing the lumber as Guillermo did. They went to lumberyard with the driver to make sure the wood we received was good quality. Mood of men has improved now that the wood is here. They went right to work as lumber was being unloaded. They now felt they were really doing something. They put up roof. Also screened the windows. Waiting for the wood made us trust God and his timing. We were impatient and questioning the delays because we wanted the wood.

VBS had thirty people. We feel more organized and more comfortable now. Our expectations of what we needed to do for VBS in Mexico were much different than what people would expect here. All gestures, no matter how small or disorganized, were so appreciated. God has showed me I don't need to worry about all the little details—that "simple" is fine when we trust God. Same format for VBS. Today Frank prayed for a little girl who had fever seizures. Her parents were scared about her condition. This moved all of us. God has blessed us through the unconditional love of the people we went to serve.

Went to Bible study at Luis's church. We sang three songs for them in English and they chose songs we knew (at least a little of) in Spanish. Roads are in poor condition. Sewage runs in open ditches along the roadsides. People dump garbage in high piles along the roadsides and anywhere they can find. When piles get too big, they burn them. People in Luis's church invited us to come back anytime we were in Mexico. We filled the church with twenty of us and their members also.

Frank told me before I came that I would leave a small part of my heart in Mexico. Wrong!! I'll leave a big part of my heart there. Thoughts of leaving bring tears to my eyes—so many needs here. Doesn't seem like we are accomplishing much, but deep down I know we have accomplished so much. Kids at VBS are great, so happy with whatever we give them. Could not believe we would give them toys, crayons, and balloons. Some kids kept trying to give them back to us as they did not know what a gift was.

Thursday, May 4: Work on cookhouse is really underway. One of the teens hurt her foot and Pam looked at it. Gave her medication and told her if it didn't help soon, she would need x-rays. We're off for x-rays and Craig took us to the x-ray facility. Never tell someone you speak a little Spanish—they talk like you are fluent. Craig rescued me and interpreted for me with the doctor. We stayed in room while x-rays were being done. Went to mall for lunch while we waited for results. Back to Mexican Medical with results for Pam. No break, thank goodness.

At VBS, Ernesto's wife uses some ointment and massages the teen's ankle and this seems to have helped. Ernesto's wife seemed happy to be able to do something for us. VBS was moved to Ernesto's house at his request. This is nicer as we have his garage and aren't out in the wind and sun. After story and interpretation of Prodigal Son we have a pinata to celebrate. We hang the pinata over the rafters and everyone thought that was funny because that is not how you do a pinata. We learned the right way to do a pinata—on a rope hanging up so it can be moved to make it harder to break. Girls finished work on the shower and Pam came in to thank them. They were so proud of their work.

> I pray that anyone who has an opportunity to go on a short-term missions trip will put aside their doubts and fears and go. The blessings I received and all that God taught me I will carry with me the rest of my life.

Devotions—the teens sang and Tim prayed for his great grandmother. Ellen and I shared testimonies as to how God called us to come to Mexico. God is helping me to trust him more and to stop worrying about the little things. I'm thankful for all the love God has shown me through the team and the Mexican people. Teens love playing Uno each night. Schooling in Mexico is required only up to age 10 and no one cares if you attend or not. Education is limited in schools. School day is four hours long. Lots of student teachers in the rural areas who are unsupervised. This is sad as education can help to break poverty by allowing people to get better jobs. Tecate Beer is the number one private employer in Mexico, which says a lot about their needs. There is a high rate of alcoholism in the area. Most businesses are government-run. Really cold tonight due to the wind.

Friday, May 5: Hard work continues. We finished all the projects we started in the hospital. Guys are working hard—the walls are up on sides. Started putting sheetrock up inside the cookhouse. With one more day and more lumber we could have finished the cookhouse walls.

VBS was great. I did the story of the Wordless Book. We gave everyone bracelets with colored beads that were the colors in the book. Frank led an altar call and eight people raised their hands when he asked if anyone wanted to accept Christ. We stood with those who raised their hands while Frank prayed for them. This was a moving experience. Ernesto told Frank that he didn't need the eye medication as God healed his eyes and he could see. What a testimony.

A sad time also at VBS as this is our last day and we must say goodbye to our new friends. It was hard for them to say goodbye also. Much crying and hugging. During devotions a friend of Luis's prayed and Luis translated. He said God was going with us wherever we went and whatever we did. He prayed for our safe travels.

Time to say goodbye again. This

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My Experience With **Grief**

Tim Setzer
Waterville, Maine

AS YOU ALL know, my father died last May. This has been my first real experience of grief and it has opened my eyes in many ways. On Father's Day I shared with you some lessons my grief has taught me about being a dad. In this short space, I want to share some things I've learned about helping people in times of grief. I realize that no two people experience grief in the same way and therefore what I have learned is unique to me and may not apply to you in your grief.

First, let me repeat what I just said; everyone's experience of grief is different. This means that we should allow everyone to experience their pain in their own way and not try to force a standard of behavior upon them. Some people will shed a lot of tears, others will not. Some will be very quiet, others will be overly talkative. Some will want to be with people, others will want to be alone. Be careful not to criticize or judge but be there to share in their pain.

Second, what do you say? It's true that people say some pretty dumb things when they are trying to comfort you; but for me, I found that it didn't matter. The mere fact that they were there and trying to be a comfort was a great source of encouragement. At the same time, we can learn to be a little more sensitive. I believe it is best to not ask questions, but rather make comments. In my immediate grief, the last thing I wanted to do was answer questions, especially the question, "How are you?" That seems to be the habitual question. From my experience, I would urge us all to avoid that question. Instead of questions, make comments. Comments like, "I'm so sorry," "You're in my prayers," and "Your dad was a wonderful man,"—all of these and many more were easier for me to handle than questions. Some of the most encouraging people said nothing. They simply gave a big hug. That meant a lot!

Some of the most encouraging people said nothing. They simply gave a big hug.

Third, do not ask what you can do to help, just do what you feel needs to be done. I know I have the habit of saying if I can help, just call. In a time of grief, it is a great help to see people with the gift of helps and mercy just doing what they know needs to be done.

I've already made my fourth point but I want to drive it home again. For me, a person's presence was more important than anything. A hug with no comment meant so much. One church couple, after getting the call on the prayer chain, rushed over to the house. There weren't any great words, but their presence was very comforting.

Finally, do not forget that the pain endures. Keep praying, keep being present, and keep giving support. ❑

Timothy Setzer is senior pastor of Blessed Hope Advent Christian Church in Waterville, Maine. This article is taken from the July 1995 issue of their church newsletter.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Each month I receive church newsletters and bulletins from Advent Christian congregations across the United States. During the first week of the month, I go through each one in preparation for the church news column that appears in each issue of the *Advent Christian News*. But what I enjoy most about those newsletters is reading the challenging and inspirational articles that pastors write. These articles deserve a wider circulation so I've selected eight of them for this special *Witness* feature. While these articles do not have a common theme or subject, they do represent some important thinking about Christian doctrine, ministry, and living. I hope you'll find these articles both inspirational and challenging.

The Wonderful Covenant Names of God

Tom Warner
San Diego, Calif.

THE NAMES of God reveal his commitment to be gracious to his people. They reveal some very encouraging characteristics of our great God, and help us to know him better and trust him more!

In Exodus 3:1-15, God told Moses his special covenant name: In Hebrew, it is "YHWH" (v. 15, represented by "Lord" with all capital letters, in most English Bibles). It was probably pronounced "Yahweh" and was sometimes shortened to "Yah" as in "hallelujah" (praise the Lord). The best known English equivalent is "Jehovah." That pronunciation is not perfectly accurate, but the meaning matters more than the pronunciation.

The Jews were afraid to pronounce YHWH, for fear they would take it in vain (Ex. 20:7). We should be careful to use God's names reverently!

The name of God in Exodus 3:15 is in the third person, and it appears in 3:14 in the first person as "I Am Who I Am" (v. 14, Hebrew='ehyeh 'aser 'ehyeh), or "I Am" (v. 14, 'ehyeh). In other words, "Jehovah" (YHWH) means the same thing as "I Am Who I Am." But what does that mean?!

Certain Old Testament scholars such as Gerhard Von Rad and Bruce Waltke believe it means something like this: "I am present, the One truly present," i.e., "I will be with you; you can count on Me." In other words, this name is God's promise to be actively present with his covenant people, in order to bless, guide, protect, and provide for them.

After Moses led the people out of Egypt, God began to reveal just how he would "be with" his people. Through various circumstances, and later through predictive passages of Scripture, God's gracious, faithful character was further revealed in several combination names. Study the context of the following verses to help you appreciate the meaning of these covenant compound names.

- Genesis 22:13-14: Jehovah-jireh, which means "the Lord will provide."
- Exodus 15:26: Jehovah-rapha, which means "the Lord who heals you."
- Exodus 17:15: Jehovah-nissi, which means "the Lord your banner (of victory)."
- Exodus 31:13: Leviticus 20:8; 21:8; 22:32;Ezekiel 20:12: Jehovah-mekaddishkem, which means "the Lord who sanctifies you."
- Judges 6:24: Jehovah-shalom, which means "the Lord our peace."
- Jeremiah 23:6; 33:16: Jehovah-tsidkenu, which means "the Lord our righteousness."
- Ezekiel 48:35: Jehovah-shammah, which means "the Lord is there."

These Old Testament names of God are still relevant for us. God remains the same forever (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Hebrews 13:8)!

Our Lord Jesus used the name of God for himself! He said, "Before Abraham was, I Am" (John 8:58; cf. Exodus 3:14, "I AM"). He who was given the name "Jesus" (Yahshua, or "Jehovah our Salvation") has promised to be with his disciples until the end of the age (Matthew 28:18-20). Trust him for everything you need! ❑

Tom Warner is pastor of North Park Community Advent Christian Church in San Diego, Calif.

"Jehovah" (YHWH) means the same thing as "I Am Who I Am." But what does that mean?

Is Church **Important?**

J. Ronald Schoolcraft
Jacksonville, Fla.

WHEN MY daughter Pat was five or six years old, we visited my brother's farm, and she went with him to do the chores. Later, all out of breath, she ran back to the house and said to me, "Daddy those pigs put their feet in their supper!"

In 2 Peter 2:18-25, Peter used an illustration about hogs to warn us not to turn our backs on Jesus. My concern is not for those who leave Jesus and go back to the old life of sin. I want to focus on those who get mad and separate themselves from their church.

Let me illustrate. A man was an elder of his church for over twenty years. A new constitution was adopted calling for the rotation of officers every three years. When election time came he was not reelected, so he left the church, stayed home, and sulked to the day of his death.

Here are some of the responses I have had to my efforts to get such people back on the firing line for Jesus. First, "I can be a good Christian and stay at home!" But the Bible teaches us that following Jesus is something we do individually and corporately. If you are physically able, you belong in the fellowship of the church body! Read Ephesians 5. Jesus loved the church! Jesus died for the church! Don't miss regular opportunities to worship your Creator.

A family was on their way to the lake one Sunday, and as they passed their church the mother said, "We really ought to have gone to church today!" "We can worship the Lord at the lake just as well!" said the father. Their little girl in the back spoke up, "But we won't, will we?"

Second, "I don't like the way they do things!" No church is perfect. But, remember, you are there to meet Jesus! And that is your own personal responsibility. Shut out everything else and tune in to him! You will be blessed.

Third, "Someone said some hard things and I was insulted!" Remember, they crucified Jesus! He did not

The Bible teaches us that following Jesus is something we do individually and corporately.

quit. And he says to you and me, "Love your enemies!" I have a good friend who, whenever someone told him that another had talked about him, he would simply say, "Tell him he needs to pray!" And I am sure he prayed for them too!

Fourth, "I'll go elsewhere! There's nothing for my children here!" Nothing but Jesus! Let me ask you, "What guarantee do you have that things will suit you there?" Why not go to work and make things different here? Could not your children bring their friends? You are saved to serve; not to sit back and enjoy the fruits of others.

Fifth, "I'll go back someday!" Remember, today is the only time you can be assured of! Think about accidents, death, and disease. Notice the reasoning of James in chapter 4:13-15. If there is something you need to do for the Lord Jesus, do it now! Someone has said, "Life is too short to take long chances!"

When you walk out you testify that you just don't have it! It takes a real man or woman to live for Jesus! Then, too, you are saying that you really do not believe the Word of God because it declares that the grace of God is sufficient for all our needs; and that includes getting along with that person in the church that you think is impossible.

When you leave Jesus' church, you turn your back on the best friend you've ever had! Jesus loves us in spite of our faults. How true the words of the hymn: "No one ever cared for me like Jesus!" He comes to our aid without the hope of reward, and without price! Jesus is the answer to your problem no matter what it is! Don't let some little, petty thing that someone has done get between you and Jesus!

Remember, too, Jesus is your only hope of life eternal! I like what John says, "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:12). You do not need a degree in theology to understand that! Add to that the words of Peter, "Salvation is found in no one

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Living Out God's **Mercy**

Steve Lawson
Four Oaks, N.C.

"I WON'T DO it! That person does not deserve it! They have hurt me too many times." Stop! What are we saying? Every Sunday we pray for God to forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors. How would our reaction to others change if our mind set was to model God's mercy toward us?

The parable of the "Unmerciful Servant" in Matthew 18:21-35 warns us of our attitude in our relationships toward God and our fellow man. In the parable, a servant is brought before a king to settle accounts. The servant owes an enormous sum, in the millions by today's standards. As he approaches the king he knows there is no way he can repay the debt. The king would be within his right to take everything he owns and put him in prison.

The servant falls before the king pleading for mercy hoping for more time to repay the debt. The king responds with unparalleled mercy, forgiving the entire debt. The servant leaves astonished over the king's generous mercy.

As he walks out of the palace a fellow slave passes by. This man owes him a few days wages, 100-200 dollars by today's standards. He demands the money from his fellow servant. When he is unable to pay, the servant has the fellow slave thrown into prison until the debt is paid.

Word of what happened was reported to the king and he had his servant thrown in prison until the debt was repaid. In verse 35 it is reported that we will be dealt with in the same way if we do not forgive our brothers.

The fact of God's mercy is a great privilege for the Christian. The mercy of God in forgiving us frees us from a debt of sin which we could only repay with our lives. However, God's mercy also enables us to be merciful to others. Yes, we may have the right to be angry. We may stand with the support of the law, of society, even the church. The person who has hurt us may not deserve mercy in our eyes. But in comparison to what God has done for us, forgiveness and mercy must be applied.

Discipline must be exercised in love and this cannot be done until our bitterness has been dealt with through the mercy that only God can give us.

Another important factor in the application of mercy involves the discipline and restoration of the individual. As Christians, discipline must be exercised in love and this cannot be done until our bitterness has been dealt with through the mercy that only God can give us. The needs of the other person must be dealt with in love, not in condemnation or judgment. This can happen as we apply mercy in our relationships in the same way that God has granted us mercy in our relationships with him. Remember the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount; "Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy" (Matthew 5:7).

Mercy means showing compassion to someone who has hurt or offended you. Each of us stands before God as condemned and are shown unmerited mercy and grace. How can we, in living under such mercy and grace, not show others mercy in our relationship to them. ❑

Steve Lawson is pastor of Hickory Grove Advent Christian Church in Four Oaks, N.C.

True Love **Waits**

Douglas Foss
Lenox, Mass.

"*Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body*" (1 Corinthians 6:18).

Did you know that kids see over 14,000 acts of sexual contact on television every year? Did you know that 40 percent of freshmen, 48 percent of sophomores, 57 percent of juniors, and 72 percent of seniors have had sex? Did you know that since the federal government began its major contraception program in 1970, unwed pregnancies have increased 87 percent among 15-19 year olds, and abortions among teens have risen 67 percent? It doesn't appear as though our culture and churches are fulfilling the mandate to "flee immorality."

Last March, we celebrated a service of dedication and commitment during our 10:45 a.m. worship service. Approximately forty youth from Hope Church, ranging in ages from thirteen to eighteen, committed themselves to remain abstinent before marriage. The celebration of commitment took place in conjunction with a series of messages delivered on marriage and family life, and in conjunction with a number of Bible lessons which were delivered by Pastor Mike Tuttle to our youth during their respective youth group meetings. Each lesson centered upon the theme of sexual purity before marriage.

During the previous week the youth were challenged by Pastor Mike to sign a pledge card which stated the following:

"Believing that true love waits, I make a commitment to God, myself, my family, those I date, my future mate, and my future children to be sexually pure until the day I enter marriage."

These cards were then laminated and during the Sunday morning worship service handed back to the youth.

It is no mystery that we are living in a highly promiscuous society where sexual purity is criticized as being archaic, antiquated, and unappealing. However, in spite of a culture which neglects to conform to God's law and despite intense peer pressure and numerous external forces which would encourage our youth to violate God's command to remain sexually pure, our youth have certainly taken an honorable and right step in the eyes of their Lord. They have taken the first step in "fleeing immorality."

Consider for a moment some of the advantages of remaining sexually pure before marriage. Notice how the favor of God is projected upon those who remain sexually pure for marriage. All who practice abstinence before marriage will be spared needless guilt, frustration, broken dreams, disaster, pregnancy, lost reputations, and disease. Their chances of dying from AIDS are dramatically reduced. In addition, those who practice abstinence before marriage, when married, are less likely to struggle with jealousy, mistrust, and unhappiness. Their marriages are less likely to end in divorce. It is a fact that abstinence before marriage ultimately contributes to solid, enduring, and satisfying marriages.

Abstinence before marriage ultimately contributes to solid, enduring, and satisfying marriages.

Please continue to pray for the youth of Hope Church and for Christian young people everywhere as they endeavor to remain faithful to the commands of Scripture which clearly teach the principle of abstinence. Let's not sell our young people short. By the grace of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit living within them, they can fulfill their commitment to flee immorality. ❑

Douglas Foss is senior pastor at Hope Church (A.C.) in Lenox, Mass. Earlier this year, he completed the doctor of ministry degree at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Miss. This article originally appeared in the *Beacon of Hope* (April 1995).

Standing at a **Crossroads**

Sam Warren
Jacksonville, Fla.

SUPPOSE your bank credited your account each morning with $86,400, carried no balance from day to day, and allowed you to keep no cash in your account. Then, suppose that evening the bank canceled out whatever you failed to use during that day.

All of us have such a bank. Its name is *time*. Every morning it credits us with 86,400 seconds. Every night it rules off as lost whatever time we have failed to invest for good during the day. It carries over no balance. Each day it opens up a new account. Each night it burns the records of the day. If you fail to use the day's deposits, the loss is yours.

There's no going back with time. There is no drawing against tomorrow. You must live in the present on today's deposits. You must invest in it wisely in order to get the best out of life. This is the truth that the apostle Paul was trying to share with the Ephesian believers when he wrote, *"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).*

Note that Paul uses the Greek word for time *(kairos)*, translated as "opportunity," when encouraging the believers to live their lives wisely. I think this is a word that was not only good for the first century, but for everyone who wants to live faithfully for the Lord today.

The 20th century philosopher Alfred E. Newman once said, *"Most folks don't know what they want but they're pretty sure they don't have it."* Paul, the apostle, speaks of being a person who knows where he is going (wise) and knows how to use every situation of *"today,"* in order to make a good *"tomorrow."* Oftentimes, when we see someone going boldly where no one has gone before, we think they're either courageous or lost.

The apostle Paul made it clear to the believers in Ephesus that the only way to *"...make the most of every opportunity..."* was to know the *"...will of the Lord" (Eph. 5:17).* While David wrote that God had made known to him the path of life (Ps. 16:11), he also asked God to teach him his ways and lead him in a straight path, because of his oppressors (Ps. 27:11). This, then, is a two-fold task of every believer. He or she must be confident that God will lead them and on the other hand constantly seek out God's will for their lives.

Oftentimes, when we see someone going boldly where no one has gone before, we think they're either courageous or lost.

This approach to living wisely for the Lord implies that the believer not only ask the right questions of the Lord, but more importantly, is eager and willing to hear the answers. But, where do we start?

A starting place

What does Christ want for me right now? What will it cost? Am I willing to pay the price for what Christ wants in my life? When should I start paying the price for what Christ wants in my life?

I'm confident that the church could live more wisely today. As Christians, we don't take full advantage of the opportunities God provides us. Perhaps we take for granted those things we should cherish the most.

Are we willing to ask some tough questions? Do we know what Christ wants for our church? Are we willing to pay the price? Are we ready to respond to his call right now? I think our churches and our society is at a crossroads. The question is simply, "When will we make the most of the opportunities before us?"

The answer must be now! The time is now! The opportunity is now! It is time for the church to go boldly where no church has gone before! Will you ask yourself today, "Am I willing to do God's will today so that the church can go forward tomorrow? It may be true that we can't change the past, but we do not have to repeat it! We must decide now to live boldly for Christ... today! ❑

Sam Warren is senior pastor of West Jacksonville, Fla., Advent Christian Church. From the July 1995 *West Jax Story.*

A Simpler View of **Congregational Life**

Carl Rundgren
Northwood, N.H.

TAKE A LOOK around the evangelical church scene today, and one comes away with the impression that more and busier is better. With many voices in the church-growth field saying that growing churches have schedules that are varied, busy, and comprehensive, it's easy for a small congregation to develop an inferiority complex.

The Lord, however, has other desires for his people. For one thing, he does not want his children—individually or collectively—to compare themselves with any others in the family of God. In John 21:21-23, for example, Peter asked Jesus how his life would compare with John's. Jesus' answer is good advice for all of us. In essence, he said, "If I want his life to be different from yours, what is that to you? You follow me."

What does the Lord desire of our congregation in this matter of following him? What shape would our congregational life take, though we are small, if our focus became what is essential? I do believe that, by his grace, we would become:

1. A congregation that worships him in Spirit and in truth, with an awareness of the Lord in our midst, and a desire to learn from his Word. The Lord, not programs, is the center of our life. If we begin with him, those things that are necessary will follow. Our chief concern should be to glorify God in all we do and say.

2. A congregation that demonstrates care for one another at every opportunity, praying for one another, encouraging one another to walk in the knowledge of God's Word. His purpose in calling us together is to minister to one another according to his Word. We are not to be a group of people waiting for others to meet our needs. Rather, we are called to be a group of people constantly looking out for the needs of others.

3. A congregation that prepares ourselves, individually and collectively, to minister in the world to whomever the Lord gives us opportunity. While we worship the Lord in a specific building on Sunday mornings, our ministry as a congregation is conducted outside those walls during the week. Our time on Sunday mornings is part of our preparation for that ministry. Beyond Sunday morning, we can also prepare ourselves through individual or group study of God's Word and the ministry to which he has called us.

What shape would our congregational life take, though we are small, if our focus became what is essential?

4. A congregation that develops additional programs when committed individuals are compelled by the Lord to act on his behalf. We are under no obligation to start any program simply because it is the thing to do. However, if the Lord lays a burden upon one or more of our members, they should act, and the rest of the congregation should support them. The most useful programs in any local congregation are those led by members who are compelled by a sense of God's call.

5. A congregation that is always open to those who are seeking the Lord. We are not a closed society. If we make no effort to seek the salvation of others, we have failed. Their acceptance or rejection of God's truth does not indicate our failure. We fail only if we keep his Good News to ourselves.

These five congregational characteristics are not dependent upon the size of the congregation. Even a handful of Christians can, by God's grace, become an effective instrument in God's hand in the work he has called us all to do. May the Lord make us just such a congregation to the praise of his glory and grace. ❑

Carl Rundgren is pastor of the Northwood, N.H., Advent Christian Church. This article is from the July 1995 *Narrow News Brief.*

Out of Sight, **Out of Mind?**

A. Cameron Ainsworth
Torrington, Conn.

"IS IT NOT written: 'my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations?' But you have made it a 'den of robbers'" (Mark 11:17).

We all love to hear how Jesus angrily drove the money changers out of the temple and how he put the sellers of sacrificial animals to flight. These people were using religion for their own greedy purposes and they deserved this treatment. Then, too, we like to see this display of Jesus' manhood. With right on his side, the Master dared to stand alone against these temple parasites, and they all scattered before him like a flock of frightened birds. But I would like to suggest that, when we really understand the words of Jesus quoted above, we do well to be a bit uncomfortable ourselves.

It is clear that the area of the temple where the animal sellers and money changers were allowed to operate their businesses could not have been conducive to worship. Imagine the sound of birds and animals along with the shouts of the sellers and money changers announcing their specials for the day. The sights and smells there would distract even the most determined of worshipers! And where was this unholy activity going on? In the court of the Gentiles, the part of the temple which God had designated for seekers of God and of truth from other nations to use. No wonder Jesus was angry. Here was ample evidence that the Judaism of that day had lost its missionary zeal.

But how did this happen? Well, first of all, worshipers of that day wanted to be comfortable. "Some of those Gentiles are sincere and would stay in their place," they might have said, "but encourage them to come in large numbers, and soon we'll have to walk through their ranks like strangers ourselves. They might even try to take over!" Those worshipers felt little responsibility for the salvation of Gentiles as long as they could keep them out of sight. So, gradually the Gentile seekers had been squeezed out of the temple and animals, sellers, and money changers had taken their place.

Do we not face the same temptation? Do we not tend to resist anything or anyone which makes us a little uncomfortable as we worship? Isn't it easy to feel that "our church" is to be maintained in ways that are pleasing to us? May we as a church be ready to make any sacrifice or any adjustment (providing it is not an unscriptural one) to reach out to those who need our ministry. Simply put, if we are to be the church of Jesus Christ, must we not love (and seek to draw to us) those who are lost? Being evangelistic is not only a matter of correct doctrines and altar calls; it is also a lifestyle patterned after that of our Lord Jesus Christ who came to seek and save the lost. ❑

We all love to hear how Jesus angrily drove the money changers out of the temple, but we do would well to be a bit uncomfortable ourselves.

A. Cameron Ainsworth is pastor of the Torrington, Conn., Advent Christian Church.

Important?

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else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Finally, let me warn you that when you leave your church, you become a stumbling block to others! What about that young Christian who thought you were great? And those who trusted you? What does it say to your children? You are saying to them that Jesus really can't be your all in all and provide grace to help in time of need! Think about it! You might cause one to be lost when Jesus comes!

I like the prophet Isaiah's words: "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon" (Isaiah 55:6-7). Church is important! It's where we can learn to grow in Christ and work together to accomplish what he calls us to do. ❑

Veteran Advent Christian pastor J. Ronald Schoolcraft lives in Jacksonville, Fla., and serves as an elder at West Jacksonville Advent Christian Church. This article originally appeared in the August 1995 *West Jax Story*.

The Things of Earth

Fern Smith
Lewiston, Idaho

HER TREMBLING voice on the other end of the line immediately revealed her fear and insecurity. "It was a terrible awakening. We were so overcome by the violent shaking we could hardly move. Then there was the sound of furniture falling, glass breaking, TV crashing to the floor, and that awful, indescribable noise." Reacting in shock, minds traumatized by unreality, the family found themselves together in the darkness. What was happening? Could they get out before the structure gave way? All this and more came from my unnerved daughter following the January 1994, 6.6 earthquake that struck Southern California.

Ten days later, I found myself headed toward Los Angeles to give emotional support. When natural disasters hit, we can feel helpless and vulnerable. We come face to face with our smallness as compared to the immensity of the universe. Yet, natural disasters come as surely as man-made tragedies, and are followed by the myriad of questions, the why's? Looking for answers, we often attempt to spiritualize, hoping to quiet our fears. Yes, God often intervenes, but sometimes he does not. We want to come up with an explanation that will bring peace and understanding—now! Could our wanting to make it go away deny the involvement of God in our circumstance?

We are always on safe ground when we direct attention to Jesus Christ. Dwelling on our personal despair means we have lost sight of the Shepherd of our souls.

Safe ground

What can we, as Christians, take into our suffering world? More specifically, what can I offer in times like these that will make a difference? Helping to literally pick up the pieces is a starting place; however, emotional adjustments are not so easily accomplished. Whether the ground has belched its forces from 10 miles below the surface or life has produced other earthquakes of great magnitude, there is no earthly solace, only frustration and fear as the aftershocks go on and on.

While lying back on the reclining seat of Alaska Airlines, I recalled the beautiful words of the old, familiar chorus we had sung just the day before in worship. "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of his glory and grace." God's revelation was wonderful. The quake had become strangely dim as I meditated on his sovereignty, his lordship, and his compassion. That was it! It was not *what* I could do but *who* could do it! I know during stressful occurrences, room is provided for more faith and confidence in God's caring. Because Jesus is our mediator, we are always on safe ground when we direct attention to Jesus Christ himself. Dwelling on our personal despair means we have lost focus, lost sight of the Shepherd of our souls. In listening to the Spirit of God, we can find revelation of his assurance, presence, and comfort. God waits patiently for us to turn our eyes to him. We all want to have faith but try to concoct it ourselves. Jesus alone is the "author and perfecter of our faith." He creates it in us. Only in communion with him is faith grown. "I am the vine, you are the branches. Remain in me, and I will remain in you."

After assessing the damage and beginning the process of finding order in the midst of chaos, we can reflect on how surely devastation has placed us in enough darkness to begin to see the "light of his glory and grace." We had evidence of God's compassion as phone calls came from across the country, neighbors' homes became havens, relatives offered help, financial aid was made available. God's grace had been channeled through compassionate friends.

My daughter's recollection of her fear has begun to diminish with time. Her faith has been strengthened and she, too, will one day give testimony with the psalmist, "I will not die, but live and proclaim what the Lord has done." As we encounter the earthquakes of life, whether the shock of a terminal diagnosis, a teenager who has lost the way, death of a loved one or just plain weariness of the soul, let us find hope in knowing "the things of earth will grow strangely dim in

the light of his glory and grace."

When Paul instructed us to think about whatever is praiseworthy, I am reminded of what he wrote to the Christians in Corinth: "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed." Also, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Cor. 4:8,9, 16-18 NIV).

One day, because of God's grace, we will not only be ushered into his eternal glory, but the "things of earth" will vanish away!" ❑

Life's Perfect Motto

"In God we trust" should ever be
The motto of humanity.
None other ever will be true;
True trust in him will none e'er rue.

Draw near to him with sincere heart
For from his own he'll never part.
True love was shown on Calvary
And true it will forever be.

Let him in life e'er be your guide
And ever stay close to his side,
For he your all would ever be.
For this Christ died on Calvary.

He came to earth mankind to save.
Death could not hold him in the grave.
All who will put their trust in him
Will ne'er be found out on a limb.

None will he ever turn away;
He o'er the universe holds sway.
There's just one thing he will not do.
He's promised ne'er to lie to you.

E'er let his love show in the life
If you'd vict'ry over strife.
Salvation has no other source
For Christ in life marked out the course.

—C.W. Temple
The Poet Parson

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

Mission Prayer Partnership

December

1 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Russell and Noelle Carle** are having with two congregations near Auckland, New Zealand.

2 Pray that the **Carle** family will sense God's love and presence in a special way throughout this holiday season.

3 On this first Sunday of the **Advent season**, praise God for his sovereign control over human history.

4 Praise God for the ministry of the **Conditional Immortality Association**, a New Zealand association of Christians who believe in Conditional Immortality.

5 Pray that God will enable evangelical Christians in **New Zealand** to communicate the good news of Christ's love in their highly secular society.

6 Praise God that **Steven and Ann Lay** have returned to Japan to begin their second term of career mission service.

7 Pray for **Steven and Ann** as they continue their church planting ministry in the suburbs of Kobe, Japan.

8 Praise God for the effective ministry that our **Japanese** Advent Christian brothers and sisters in Christ have had during the past year.

9 Pray for **Karen Rigney** as she assists the Lays with church planting and continues her language study in Japan.

10 On this second Sunday of Advent, praise God that **thousands of lives** have been touched for Jesus Christ this year.

11 Praise God for over 120 combined years of ministry that **Marion Damon**, **Barbara White**, and **Beryl Joy Hollis** completed in India this fall.

12 Pray that **Marion**, **Barbara**, and **Beryl Joy** will not only enjoy their first months of retirement but will know God's love and presence in a special way during this Advent season.

13 Praise God for the opportunity that **Jeff Vann**, an Advent Christian missions student studying at Columbia International University, had to do a twelve-week internship at Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

14 Pray for administrative director **Warren Prestidge** and the faculty and students at Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

15 Praise God for the effective service that **Margaret**

Helms and **David Vignali** have provided for Advent Christian missions during 1995.

16 Pray that **Filipino** Advent Christian pastors and congregations will continue to effectively proclaim the gospel during the coming new year.

17 On this third Sunday of Advent, praise God for his **mercy and grace** toward us through Jesus Christ.

18 Praise God for a record-breaking **Penny Crusade** during 1995.

19 Pray that God will give World Mission Director **Harold Patterson** an extra measure of wisdom and strength as he seeks God's continued leading for the future of Advent Christian world missions.

20 Praise God for the good ministry that **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** continue to have with the Advent Christian congregation in El Florido, Mexico.

21 Pray for Mexico field superintendent **Carlos Quintero** as he seeks God's leading for Advent Christian church planters for Mexico.

22 Praise God for the ministry of faculty and staff at **Tecate Bible Institute** as they continue to prepare Mexican pastors and church planters.

23 As you prepare to celebrate Christmas, pray for your **relatives**, **friends**, and **associates** who do not yet know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

24 On this fourth Sunday of Advent, praise God for the **birth of his Son** Jesus Christ.

25 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"— which means, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). Praise God for the **miracle** of the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

26 Pray that God will bless the work of Advent Christian pastors involved in urban and ethnic ministry in the United States—**Melchor Jandayan**, **Lee Welkley**, **Aloysius Okon**, **Dennis Ortega**, **Ray Marco**, **Francis Ssebikindu**, and others.

27 Praise God for Advent Christian expansion in the African nations of **Ghana**, **Liberia**, and **Nigeria** during the past several years.

28 Pray that God will call out missionaries from the Advent Christian Church to open the new mission field in **Honduras**.

29 Praise God for the opportunity that Advent Christian pastors and lay leaders from the Southern United States had to interact with **Dann Spader** at the *Growing a Healthy Church* workshop held last month in Charlotte.

30 Pray that each Advent Christian national and international missionary will be **energized** by the Holy Spirit for effective ministry in 1996.

31 As we enter 1996, praise God that "neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the **love of God** that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

Limbaugh continued from page 8

me—churches like that are just waiting for a person exactly like you to join their team and become a difference-maker.

After all, look at government, business, industry, schools, the media—as much good as they do, none of them holds the ultimate answers to life. God's church does, and part of the great adventure of Christianity is being a player in his movement to extend that influence into every nook and cranny of the world.

When I see firsthand the way God can turn a life inside out—like the way he transformed one of my friends from being a street gang leader steeped in violence into an inner-city youth worker serving kids out of love—I have to ask, "Who wouldn't want to deploy their talent in God's primary change-agent for the world?"

So on a personal and spiritual level, the church can help Rush Limbaugh, and in using his spiritual gift, Rush Limbaugh can help Christ's work through the church. And, of course, his radio and TV programs give him a rare opportunity to influence America. Christians should be praying that he would use that power not only to speak the truth but also to do it in love.

There's no question that Limbaugh knows what God can do. "I don't want any praise when I say this, but the primary influence on my life is almighty God," he said in a magazine interview. "Without God's influence in life, nothing else matters."

That, Jesus would say, is the kind of message his listeners need to hear him speak—and to watch him live. ❑

Mexico

time to Luis, Delia, and their four children. No one wants to say goodbye and Luis assures us they'll be there in the morning for that. Guillermo told us Ernesto had the say in the neighborhood and our being invited to his house was a real sign we had been accepted. When Ernesto says "come," people come to his house, which would explain why there were more people at VBS when we were there.

Saturday, May 6: Our last morning. We cleaned up the buildings and grounds so they would be neat when we left. Found all our tools so they could be packed. Cleaned dorms. Guys still working on cookhouse putting the tar paper on the roof to protect area where they sheetrocked inside. Luis and his family and neighbor came to say goodbye. Said goodbye to Craig and Pam. It was hard to say bye to Pam as she is leaving in August and we'll never see her when we go there again. As we were ready to leave, it started raining slightly. Luis told us the rain was

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

There is a childhood into which we have to grow just as there is a childhood which we must leave behind...One is a childishness from which but few of those who are counted wisest among men have freed themselves. The other is childlikeness, which is the highest quality of humanity.

—George MacDonald

Ethics is first a way of *seeing* before it is a matter of *doing*. The ethical task is not to tell you what is right or wrong but rather to train you to see. That explains why, in the church, a great deal of time and energy are spent in the act of worship: In worship, we are busy looking in the right direction.

—Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon

God wrestles with all of us and cripples us even as he crippled Jacob. Pain plants the flag of truth in a rebel heart.

—Joe Aldrich

There are many people I know who possess a vision of (personal) evolution yet seem to lack the will for it. They want, and believe it is possible, to skip over discipline, to find an easy shortcut to sainthood. Often they attempt to attain it by simply imitating the superficialities of saints, retiring to the desert or taking up carpentry. Some even believe that by such imitation they have really become saints and prophets, and are unable to acknowledge that they are still children and face the painful fact that they must start at the beginning and go through the middle.

—M. Scott Peck

My denial of my sin protects, preserves, perpetuates that sin! Ugliness in me, while I live in illusions, can only grow the uglier.

—Walter Wangerin

Some [evangelicals] have fixated upon "me and the Bible, and especially me," so that what Bible becomes is primarily an assertion of inward feelings. This has sadly prevented readers from...learning that the Spirit has a history, and that the body of Christ is being called forth in that history has unity.... Beware of the "evangelical" who wants to read the Bible without the historic voices of the church, who is only willing to listen to his own voice or the voices of contemporaries in the dialogue. Evangelicals have usually been the losers when they have systematically neglected the saints and martyrs and consensual writers of the earliest Christian centuries.

—Thomas Oden

Despair is suffering without meaning.

—Victor Frankl

The man or woman who does not know God demands an infinite satisfaction from other human beings which they cannot give, and in the case of the man, he becomes tyrannical and cruel. It springs from this one thing— the human heart must have satisfaction, but there is only one Being who can satisfy the last abyss of the human heart, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

—Oswald Chambers

Growth into Christ-likeness often depends on our not getting our way. When the hammer of God's "no" pounds the wedge of frustrated longing deep into our being, a piece of egocentricity breaks off and we come that much closer to being a masterpiece.

—Donald McCullough

Sources: George MacDonald from *The Tutor's First Love* (Bethany House Publishers), 23. Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon from *Resident Aliens* (Abingdon Press), 95. M. Scott Peck in *The Road Less Traveled* (Simon & Schuster), 77. Thomas Oden from *Good News* (Jan.-Feb. 1993). Donald McCullough from *Waking from the American Dream* (InterVarsity Press), 155.

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God's tears of sadness as we left Mexico and its people.

Sunday, May 7: Hot shower felt great after a week in Mexico with a tarp around a frame and a hose to shower with. Time to fly home. I'm diverting from Newark to Providence and not going back to Portland. At Newark I did not want to say goodbye to my team members, and as I said goodbye to them, I wondered why I changed my ticket for the last part of my journey.

Great to see my husband and daughter at the airport. I missed them and it's great to be back home—although another week in Mexico would have been great also. I'm thankful God called me to go to Mexico. When I was told I was going to go I laughed and did not believe the person who told me. I pray that anyone who has an opportunity to go on a short-term missions trip will put aside their doubts and fears and go. The blessings I received and all that God taught me I will carry with me the rest of my life. ❑

Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
891 Queen St. #60
Southington, CT 06489

Marion Damon (March 27)
891 Queen St. #60
Southington, CT 06489

Beryl Joy Hollis (December 16)
39B Belmont Terrace
Milford
North Shore City
NEW ZEALAND

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Warren Prestidge
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Margaret Helms (September 18)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-794-62-8744

Karen Rigney (June 5)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-794-62-8744

New Zealand

Russell and Noelle Carle
(December 30 and December 19)
(Ryan, November 15, 1979)
(Emily, June 23, 1983)
(Peter, August 14, 1991)
51 Brylee Dr.
Conifer Grove
Auckland 1702
NEW ZEALAND

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
Bududuram Refugee Camp
National Mobilization Program
Box 46
Accra, GHANA

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

Liberia and China
Our pastor in China
(September 30 and October 26)
All correspondence should be channelled through the missions office.

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devasahayam
Beulah Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Rev. T. and Victoria Devairakkam
33, Jalan Intan 4/1
Taman Intan,
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Mexico

Carlos Quintero
387 W. Poppyfields Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
(818) 791-2447

Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Carlos Quintero

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Vice-president
Harold Patterson; World Missions
Millie Griswold; Resource Development

P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

Russell Giasson; Services
Robert Mayer; Publications
Brent Carpenter; Church Relations

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Advent Christian

WITNESS

December 1995



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photo by Jim and Mary Whitmer

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Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy, Timothy Setzer, Linda Leavitt**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria



WHAT NEXT FOR CANADA?

"VIVE LE QUEBEC LIBRE!" ("Long live free Quebec!) Those words, spoken by the late French World War II hero and premier Charles DeGaulle, touched off a movement that a few weeks ago came closer than ever to dividing the nation of Canada. And as Canadians struggle to catch their collective breath after the October 30 sovereignty referendum in their second largest province, separatist leader Lucien Bouchard has promised that Quebec will vote again on whether or not to succeed from Canada within two years.

Will Canada survive the twentieth century as a unified nation? How that question is answered will impact all of us who live on the North American continent. During the last ten years, we've witnessed the breakup of the Soviet Union, the violent fracturing of the former Yugoslavia, and the division of Czechoslovakia. Even though companies like McDonalds and Disney provide the facade of an emerging world culture, separatism is still strong especially in societies with more than one strong cultural or linguistic group. But despite the dramatic events in eastern Europe and other parts of the world, it's been easy for both Canadians and American to think, "That will never happen here."

Will Canada survive the twentieth century as a unified nation?

Now, for the first time since the U.S. Civil War of the 1860s, the separatist impulse threatens to alter the geography of North America. And separatism isn't just a Canadian issue. The United States continues to become more culturally diverse and American society faces growing difficulty with accommodating the different interests of a host of linguistic and ethnic people groups.

A distinct cultural heritage

But Canada faces a cultural situation significantly different from that of the United States. While the United States and Canada enjoy much in common, the two countries are also significantly different in some important ways. Canadian democracy is parliamentary. Canada has historically enjoyed much closer ties to England through the British Commonwealth while the United States severed all political ties with the British. And while Americans pride themselves in individualism and have long nurtured a suspicion of large institutions like government, Canadians tend to place greater emphasis on civility and on the value of a well-ordered and well-mannered society.

The biggest difference between American and Canadian society focuses on the role that England and France played in the early years of the two countries. While France supplied the American revolutionaries with much needed troops and arms, the United States was formed out of thirteen distinctly British colonies. American culture was predominantly British. Not so in Canada. Quebec was originally settled by French Europeans in the 1600s and despite the end of French rule in 1763, the province has remained predominately French both in terms of culture and language. So Canada is the product of two distinct European cultures—English and French with a strong French-speaking Canadian minority clustered mostly in Quebec.

Language plays a crucial role in French Canadian cultural and political identity. And for French Canadians, language has been the primary way to maintain their distinctive identity within Canadian society. This lies at the heart of what for many Americans and some English-speaking Canadians is a perplexing policy: official bilingualism at the federal level (For example, businesses are required by federal law to publish all packaging and sales material in both French and English.) combined with a French only policy in Quebec. While such a policy feeds resentment against Quebec in some quarters, it provides insight into the divisions among French Canadians themselves as to how to preserve their distinct

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Edward Fudge
Katy, Texas

I SCANNED the faces of the 50 or so people sitting around me on three sides, searching for any suggestion of openness or warmth, some human reflection of the Springtime that surrounded us outdoors. Instead, I saw only pain and sorrow, in countenances as bleak and stony as the nonsectarian Rothko Chapel in Houston where we had gathered to pay final respects to Mike. Such mournful assemblies had become a familiar ritual to many of these assembled, as death rapidly diminished their closest circle of acquaintances and friends.

Sara Faye and I had driven to the memorial service with Bob and Beth, a young married couple from our church. Apparently, we four heterosexuals were part of a very small minority on this particular occasion in 1990.

The printed program indicated that seven men and women would reminisce about the deceased, who had died of AIDS a few weeks before. "Mike had a lot of anger," one close friend reflected, "and we all caught it at one time or another, but we always knew that he loved us." Mike was a real "hell-raiser," if his friends were to be believed. In fact, once this meeting ended, the presider informed us, all of us were invited to a party. "Mike would like for us to do that in his honor," he explained. There was no mention of God, no word of hope, no anticipation of the hereafter.

"Give me the heart and words..."

"We do not know the next speaker," the presider said, about midway through the program. "I have talked with him one time on the telephone. But we do know the change we saw in Mike the last few weeks of his life. Those of us who were close to him know that he experienced something very profound a couple of months ago—something so meaningful to him that, from then until he died, he wanted to talk of nothing else. Whatever that was, it happened during a visit he had with our next speaker. Because of the life-changing impact that conversation had on Mike, I have asked Mr. Fudge to come and tell us whatever it was he told Mike."

As I went forward, I was thinking of Paul's words to the Philippians: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to do his good pleasure." Fear and trembling. I could certainly relate to that. "I don't know what you have in mind here today, Lord," I prayed silently, "but I know you are in charge and I ask you to give me the heart and words which you can use to your glory."

Bob and Beth showed Jesus' love

God had already used Bob and Beth, the real heroes in this story and my fellow-members at the Bering Drive Church of Christ in Houston. Several months before, they had hired a housepainter and Mike had come along to help. Along the way, they befriended this gentle gay man in his early 30s. They did not know it, but Mike already carried the HIV virus throughout his slender frame.

When Bob and Beth heard that Mike had AIDS, they responded with caring concern. As his disease progressed to its final stages, Mike, now blind and emaciated, entered a neighborhood hospice to die. Bob and Beth continued to share Christ's love through phone calls and personal visits. Beth went to see Mike almost every day, frequently taking him lunch or dinner. One day their silent witness bore fruit. "I know I am about to die," Mike told them. "Do you know someone I can talk to about God?"

Modestly underrating their own ability to communicate the gospel message, Bob and Beth called Bill, our preacher, and explained the situation

GOD IS AT WORK!

to him. Bill was about to leave for speaking appointments in another state, so he phoned me at the law office downtown and asked if I would visit Mike. I agreed to go, then called Bob and Beth for more information. Then I telephoned Mike to arrange a convenient time to visit. "God, give me words and wisdom," I beseeched as I drove to Omega House. "I certainly do not know what to say or how to say it."

A friendly volunteer met me at the door of the 50s-style bungalow. "I have come to visit Mike," I explained. "He is expecting me." There were two other dying men at Omega House besides Mike, and I greeted them as I walked past their open doors. I wondered if they could detect that inside I was scared stiff. The volunteer led me into Mike's bedroom. "Mike," she said cheerily, "You have a visitor. This is Mr. Fudge."

"Hello, Mike," I said. His sightless eyes turned toward the sound of my voice. Barely 30 years old, he looked at least 90, a living skeleton shrouded in pale skin curled in a fetal position on top of the bed covers. "Hello, Mr. Fudge," he replied. "I'm glad that you came." His voice was surprisingly strong.

"I'm a friend of Bob and Beth," I explained, as if he didn't know. We chatted small talk for a few minutes before turning to the point of the visit. "Tell me about your past experience with God," I invited. "Have you ever known the Lord in a personal way?"

"Yes," he said. His voice grew softer. "When I was a boy in Georgia, my mother was a Christian and she took us all to Baptist Sunday school. At about age 13, I accepted Christ as my Savior and was baptized. When I went away to college, though, I kind of left all that, and my life went a different direction. I haven't had much to do with God since then."

"We are all sinners, Mike," I told him, "just in different respects. But God loves us more than we can ever know, and he came in the person of Jesus Christ to die for our sins and bring us back to himself." Jesus' story of the Prodigal Son came to mind just then, and I told it again to Mike, noting that God is like the father who waits day after day for his lost children to return, and who eagerly runs to welcome them when they finally do come home.

"We can never earn God's love or forgiveness," I added. "We can only receive it by faith, trusting in what Jesus did on the cross to set us right with God. You have told me that you once knew God as your Father, but for many years you have been away from home. According to Jesus, God is ready right now to receive you and keep you with him forever, if you are genuinely sorry for your sins and sincerely ask him to forgive you. Is that what you want to do?"

As a former minister, I had visited people many times who were sick or in distress. Church members usually asked the preacher to pray, and I expected Mike to do the same. But this prayer was too intimate for a stranger's words, too personal for anyone else to express.

"Yes," Mike said, and he began praying aloud, weeping softly, then louder, finally sobbing in great convulsions as he poured out his heart to the Father who welcomes his lost children home. I wept also, with fear and trembling, knowing that this was holy ground.

God transformed Mike's life

I really intended to go back and visit Mike but never did. A few weeks later, Beth told me he had died. Several more weeks passed. Then one day the telephone rang at my office and a voice on the other end asked, "Are you the man who talked with Mike about God?" I acknowledged that I was, and my caller continued.

"I don't know if you knew it or not," he said, "but whatever you told Mike changed his life dramatically. From that day forward, he was full of joy and peace—almost like he was a new person. Several of his friends are meeting at Rothko Chapel next Saturday for a memorial service in his honor, and some of us who knew him best will be making a few remarks. Could you come tell us what you told Mike, that made such a difference in his life?"

And so we went—Bob and Beth, and Sara Faye and myself—and they offered up silent prayers while I told Mike's friends the good news that sustained him through his final days and into the world beyond. At the first mention of God, most eyes glazed over. However, a few cheeks glistened with tears, and I wondered what history those men and women had with God and what God might be doing this day "for his good pleasure."

The audience from B'nai B'rith

It was another Saturday the same year, and the circumstances and surroundings could hardly have been more different. Yet I knew that God was at work here, too, as I looked around the conference table at the 15 Jewish leaders from six Southern states. We were at the Houstonian, the elite hotel and health resort which then-President George Bush and wife Barbara officially designated as their Texas residence.

The mounted video-camera hummed softly as Alan, the host, introduced me to his seminar participants. "Our speaker for this session is a Houston attorney I have come to respect," he began. "Edward will address us for about 45 minutes on the Bible from a Christian perspective, then take your questions for the remainder of this two-hour session."

We had met a year earlier, Alan and I, when we faced off on opposite sides of a multi-million dollar lawsuit. As an associate with a major Texas law firm, I represented the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), which sued a prominent Houston businessman who defaulted on a long-term commercial lease.

The businessman hired Alan to represent him, and he was well represented. Alan was the principal partner of a prestigious, specialized law firm in the city, and had practiced much longer than I had. He and I were about the same age, however, and we felt a strong and instant rapport. Very shortly we discovered that we both were men of faith, this Jewish man and I, and soon we were lingering after depositions to discuss our personal and spiritual lives.

God used ordinary decency and respect

Despite Alan's far greater experience as an attorney, I had him "over a barrel" in the lawsuit. Under federal law, facts which might have excused the businessman's conduct under normal circumstances could not even be raised as a defense in this case. Using the federal "superpowers" at my disposal, I could simply plow the businessman under, and his skilled attorney was practically helpless to resist.

Eventually my client prevailed, which was no surprise given the legal clout at our disposal, but Alan said he was surprised by something else. "I greatly appreciate the way you dealt with my client," he said. "You could have humiliated him and ruined him for life, but you treated him in a decent and humane manner which allowed him to preserve his dignity."

One day during these proceedings, Alan broached a subject he seemingly regarded as sensitive. "As an officer of B'nai B'rith," he said, "I am in charge of a program called New Horizons." A little smile tugged at the corners of his mouth. "Each year we bring a dozen or so promising Jewish men from several states to Houston for an intensive weekend of leadership training," he continued.

He explained that these participants were chosen to represent a cross-section of the Jewish community—doctors, businessmen, accountants, and lawyers. The weekend program was equally far-ranging, and included presentations on medicine, business, law, communications, management, finance, religion, and other practical topics.

"I wonder if you would be willing to come to our next seminar and talk about the Bible from a Christian perspective."

Without hesitation, I accepted the invitation and immediately began to pray and think about what I should say.

I knew that Jews today generally consider all Gentiles to be Christians, including those through the centuries who have persecuted Jews, from the Crusaders to the Nazis. Because of this historical baggage, modern rabbis have come to insist that "Jewish" and "Christian" are mutually exclusive terms, and that any Jew who accepts Jesus as Messiah automatically ceases to be a Jew.

Now I asked God for words

Alan finished his introduction and the camera focused on me. "As a Christian," I began, "I owe a great debt to the Jews. I come before you today as a wild Gentile branch grafted onto the original Jewish plant. I do not come here to represent 'Christendom,' or any Christian denomination, or what you might consider cultural Christianity. I do not ask you to give up anything that is authentically Jewish, or ask you to accept anything contrary to the Hebrew Scriptures."

I acknowledged that modern rabbis deny that a Jew can believe in Jesus and remain Jewish, but told these men that was a relatively new notion which contradicted both their own Bible and historical reality. I pointed out that Jesus himself was a Jew, as were his apostles and all his earliest followers. I explained that, except for Luke and Acts, all the New Testament books were written by Jews.

I prayed much and studied long before coming to this meeting, but now I spoke extemporaneously "as the Spirit gave utterance." Beginning with the first verse of the Bible, which I quoted in the original Hebrew language these American Southerners all read and spoke, I told the story of redemption—of Paradise, the Fall, the Flood, and God's calling of Abraham and his descendants after him.

For 45 minutes I summarized the mighty acts of God from Genesis to Malachi. I then explained that the Hebrew Scriptures, which Christians revere as their Old Testament, present an unfinished symphony. Its themes of sacrifice and priesthood, of divine revelation, of messianic hope and the kingdom of God, all are completed and fulfilled in the story of Jesus of Nazareth, who lived and loved and healed, then was killed by the Romans at the instigation of the jealous priestly Sadducees, but rose from the dead on the third day "according to the Scriptures."

Every eye was attentive as I drew to the close. "As we leave here today," I said, "and through the years to come, I urge you to consider that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah foretold by your ancient prophets and the fulfillment of every ideal, dream, and aspiration of all the Hebrew Scriptures."

During the question-answer session that followed, I was as surprised by what these Jewish men did not ask as by what they did ask. Not one denied that Jesus lived, or worked miracles, or even rose from the dead. No one seriously disputed his miraculous conception, although they did not necessarily accept it.

They were troubled by the concept of the Trinity, a word I did not feel obligated to use since it is not found anywhere in Scripture. They strongly questioned the idea that God somehow became human in a specific historical person, and especially that the suffering of one man could atone for the sin of another. Perhaps most of all, they were scandalized by the continued presence of evil and injustice. "If Jesus is the Messiah," they asked, "why do we not see the Golden Age promised by the prophets?

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J. Ronald Schoolcraft
Jacksonville, Fla.

SHOULDN'T I HAVE BEEN HEALED TOO?

SOME TWENTY months ago I had major cancer surgery, followed by thirty-two sessions of radiation. Although at this point my body is free of cancer, I am plagued by a side effect of the radiation, and it seems that little progress is being made toward healing.

I must confess that at times I succumb to the human tendency to cry out, "Why? Shouldn't I have been healed too? I have prayed, and countless other individuals and church groups have prayed." I tell myself, "You have held healing services in which a few persons have testified to healing. You have preached many, many sermons on the subject of healing. You have even published a book on the subject! At this time you are not healed." Is there an explanation? Let me pose three questions.

First, *Was I wrong about Holy Scripture?* My Bible declares that my God heals all our diseases. (Psalm 103:2-3). From time to time I have found comfort in the statement, "Casting all your cares upon him (Jesus); for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

I think of Hezekiah who on one occasion prayed and his life was lengthened fifteen years, and again he used a common medication and his affliction disappeared (2 Kings 20:1-7).

Then there is the plain instruction from James (5:14-20), which many people have testified that the plan worked for them.

I believe in the Holy Scriptures! I base my future upon what it says! Two verses outline my stance: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21).

Second, *Were those healed in my presence faking?* A young lady who was healed in a service at Dowling Park contacted her doctor when she returned home, and he verified her healing. I have in my files a letter from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., verifying my own healing of a kidney disorder in 1953. No one knows better than the person who has been healed that it was a reality. Long ago the doctors' Mayo said that divine healing was far beyond the experimental stage! Thousands can witness to the truth of that statement.

Is there more?

Third, *Did I meet the stated conditions of the Holy Scripture?* I have believed with all my heart that Jesus can heal. I have fasted and prayed (Mark 9:20-29). I have always considered that my faith in God, his Son Jesus, and the Holy Scripture was strong. Jesus' use of the grain of mustard seed suggests that even little faith is effective (Matt. 17:19-20).

I have, in response to the instructions of James (5:14-20), been anointed with oil in the name of the Lord at the hand of the elders of the church, as they prayed earnestly for my healing.

Further, I have considered carefully the one issue I feel is a great factor in bringing healing, and that is, "What are you going to do after you are healed? Just enjoy being free of pain? Or use this newly acquired energy and freedom to further the cause of Jesus?" My problem is an aggravation. That is true. However, I see thousands who are in worse condition. Surely I do not simply want to be released from pain and aggravation!

Finally, *Is there more?* I wonder sometimes if God is using this to teach me patience. He knows I need it! Facetiously I say that I have checked every drugstore in Jacksonville for patience and none stock it! Really, I know that patience comes from trusting the Lord! Both James and Peter speak of it (James 1:3-4; 2 Peter 1:6).

Then, too, I wonder if it is to show me how one can bear up under affliction. Just now I went back and read again the experience of Paul with his "thorn in the flesh." I am sure that God's grace is sufficient for me too! (2 Cor. 12). With the "exceeding great and precious promises" of Holy Scripture, I realize that even with the combination of affliction and advanced age one can be surprised at what God can do!

I wonder, too, is God simply saying "Wait?" Far too many times over the past forty-nine years I have missed blessing because I got in a big hurry. As I read the Psalms I am told over and over again of the blessedness of waiting upon the Lord!

In conclusion, it may be that I should sing with D.B. Towner:

"Trust and obey, for there's no other way,
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey. ❑

Veteran Advent Christian pastor J. Ronald Schoolcraft lives in Jacksonville, Fla., and is active at the West Jacksonville Advent Christian Church.

MY NAME IS NOT "JOE!"

- or -

reflections of a first-termite

Jeff Vann
Columbia, S.C.

MY FIRST Asian experience was a sprint through the airport in Seoul, Korea. I was running behind two or three people who were talking into cellular phones, trying to connect me with my flight to Manila, which was due to take off. God, Who is merciful to the frantic, allowed me to make my flight. I also discovered, to my surprise, that when I arrived in the Philippines, so did my luggage!

The plan was for veteran Advent Christian missionary David Vignali to meet me at the airport. Unfortunately, I chose the wrong taxi stand, and therefore did not make contact with David until I got to the Christian and Missionary Alliance mission house in Manila. There, exhausted from over 24 hours of transcontinental travel, in spite of the sweltering heat, I slept well.

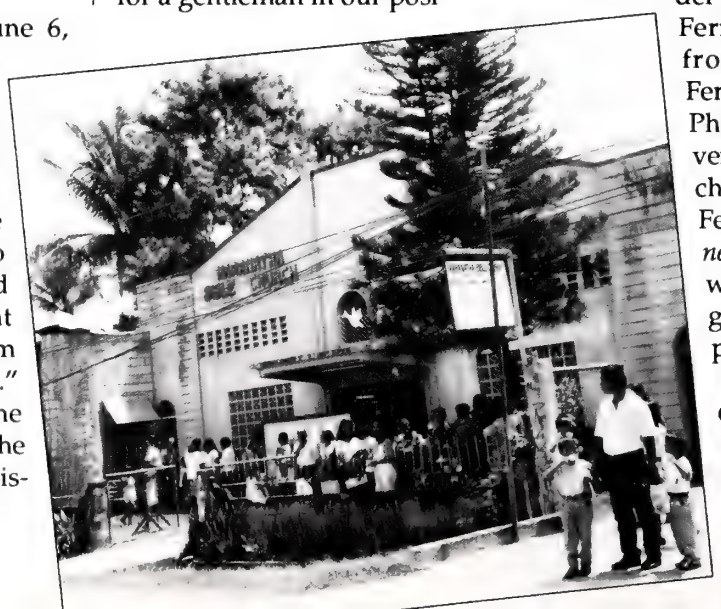
On Tuesday morning, June 6, David and I took another flight from the domestic airport in Manila, to Cagayan de Oro City on the island of Mindinao. The day that I had spent in Manila allowed me to see most of the sights any tourist would want to see. But I was no tourist. I had been sent to Cagayan to teach at Oro Bible College as a short term missionary, or "short termite." This assignment was to fulfill the internship requirements for the Master of Divinity degree in Missions I have been working on at Columbia International University, in Columbia, South Carolina. The assignment was also to give me first-hand experience working with American Advent Mission Society.

My responsibility primarily consisted of teaching two courses; each of which focused on a Bible book. One of the courses traced the argument of the book of Romans, and emphasized proper biblical interpretation. The other course surveyed the life and teachings of Jesus in Matthew's gospel. My field supervisor for the internship was Rev. Warren Prestidge, from New Zealand. Warren is the director at OBC. I discovered at once that Warren and I had at least three things in common: a love for the Bible, a love for education, and the temporary absence from loved ones in our home countries. Warren possesses the one trait which is absolutely essential for a gentleman in our position: a good sense of humor.

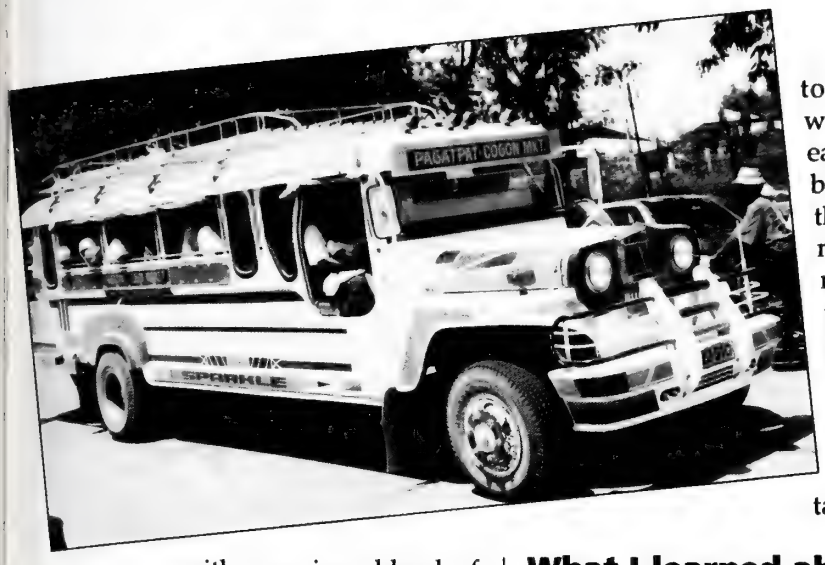
We lived in a rented house in the city which had all the comforts of home with the exception of air conditioning, and hot water for showers and shaving. We shared the house with another gentleman, Brigado Naelga, who kept us well fed, in clean clothes, and curious about Filipino customs. Brigado is a graduate of OBC, and has been a tremendous friend to AAMS missionaries for several years.

On the weekends, the three of us traveled from city to city, visiting and preaching in the Advent Christian churches. Sometimes we would need an interpreter; sometimes not. We found the churches very friendly, and enjoyed our visits with them.

On those Sundays when we did not travel (sometimes due to mechanical difficulties in our van) we enjoyed the worship services at Maranatha Bible Church (Advent Christian), under the leadership of pastor Fernando Supangan. Aside from his pastoral duties, Fernando is president of the Philippine Conference of Advent Christian churches, and chaplain at OBC. I had read Fernando's story in the *Witness*, so was already familiar with his ministry. It was a great privilege to meet him personally.



The Philippines is one of the most interesting and lively places to live in all the world. It is a republic,



with a curious blend of Asian culture, Spanish influence, American influence, Catholicism. Protestantism, and Islam. Most Filipinos are friendly, especially to Americans. If they recognize one (which is not at all difficult, since we look so peculiar) something within their genetic code prompts them to cry out "Hey Joe!" or "Hi Joe!" I must confess that sometimes I had an urge within me to reply "My name is not Joe!" But I did not yield to the urge. I have heard no rational explanation for this Filipino characteristic, thus only assume it is genetic, since the cry comes from the youngest of the young, as well as the more mature.

Signs of an indigenous Filipino Roman Catholicism are everywhere. Those animistic tendencies of the former generations have been covered by a thin veneer of Catholicism, but still thrive. Even items used for the most secular of purposes, as a result, tend to have some religious slogan painted on them.

My favorite example of this is the jeepney which prominently displays "In God We Trust" between two playboy bunny logos.

The jeepney, by the way, is a uniquely Filipino form of transportation. There is no equivalent to the jeepney anywhere else. For the price of 1 1/2 pesos (about six cents) you can have the privilege of packing yourself, with about twenty others, in the back of an elongated Jeep, and being transported from one part of the city to another, while your ears are bombarded with the latest pop music. One real advantage of the jeepney is that you are never at a loss for transportation.

What I learned about God

One of the characteristics of God which has been most significant for me during this internship was his compassion. It seemed that Pastor Fernando Supangan (chaplain at OBC) sparked my interest in the subject. One of his earliest chapel messages was based on Matthew 9:35-38, and focused on the ministry of prayer. He emphasized the act of seeing the condition of those we are praying for, and praying for the needs we see.

Later, as I taught on Matthew 9, I became intensely aware of the reason for ministry. I remember telling my students that when they begin their ministries they will have times when they do not feel worthy of the task. It is then that they must be faithful, not from a sense of calling, nor from a sense of giftedness, but because Jesus loves people.

I'm glad the bell rang at that moment, because tears had filled my eyes, and I was quite sure that I was not capable of continuing the lecture. God had been dealing with me on that same subject, and if my students got nothing from that lecture, I got something from it. My typical motivating factor for ministry has been a sense of call and giftedness. However, I had been placed in circumstances which have taxed my abilities. This internship has reminded me that it is the compassion of the Lord of the harvest which is my main reason for ministry. Since that is true, and He has sent me to minister, I can minister with confidence. I can share in the harvest, not because of who I am, or what I know, but because of who God is, and how much he loves people.

What I learned about myself

My change in roles from student to teacher was accompanied by a slight alteration in my character. Those around me, who had not observed me in my former setting, of course, did not notice it, but I did. I am referring to the fact that I acted more aggressively in that setting than I have before. I talked more, with different people, and sought more new experiences. I enjoyed the freedom I felt to seek some challenges of my own, instead of simply fulfilling other people's expectations of me.

Part of this transformation I attribute to the change in roles, but I think I will not immediately revert back to my former docility as soon as I return to the smaller desk. My confidence in myself as a teacher has been boosted by this experience, but so has my confidence in myself as a student. My knowledge of the task of biblical

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Learning to Live as God's Family

Joanne Hunter
Presque Isle, Maine

OVER THE YEARS, I have witnessed many disagreements in local churches. Some were handled well and resolved to the glory of God. Others were allowed to get so out of hand that the anger erupted like Mount St. Helens, demolishing the God-given unity of his people and leaving a smoldering debris of shattered relationships and wounded spirits. That can take years to heal, if it ever really does.

I have seen too many pastors, and pastors' families, emotionally and sometimes spiritually destroyed by the very leaders of their churches who should have been defending them, encouraging them, building them up, and helping them to grow as the shepherds God had called them to be. Pastors are as human as anyone else. They often do and say the wrong things. They are sometimes misled. They occasionally are stubbornly insistent about causes that have no eternal consequences. And they often find it hard to justify even a gentle and needed rebuke offered to them with genuine love and compassion. That, however, is no excuse for the sheep of God's pasture to bite with such perverse viciousness.

My brothers and sisters, such things ought not to be.

Minor issues trigger harsh conflict

Why is it that the issues which split churches and litter the local neighborhood with walking wounded are usually not the great theological issues which are of basic importance to our faith and fellowship? The issues which split churches are usually the sum of several minor irritations, things which have no spiritual value, except for the damage they do to God's children. These are issues like: What color should the new carpet be? Should there be a clock in the sanctuary, and if so, where? What pictures, if any, should we display? Should we change the time of the evening service? What about the new choir robes? And the list goes on and on.

I'm aware that most of the time, most of God's people mean well. But it's my impression that in spite of our best intentions, we often operate like the people of Israel did before God appointed a king. "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6).

It's also my impression that we have the same problems they did: what seems good to us as an individual may or may not be part of God's plan

for us as his family in our particular church. When it's not right, and we do it anyway, both we and the church are moved out of God's will; and the precious, fragile, God-given unity of the family is shattered.

God does not appoint us a king; rather, he has created certain positions in the church, and he has delegated varying amounts of spiritual authority and responsibility to those he places in these offices. Some of that authority may be delegated to others by the ones who hold it, but it must not be appropriated by anyone. To usurp spiritual authority from one to whom God has delegated it, is to sin against God, against the leader in question, and against the whole body of Christ in that church.

This can be an especially tricky problem if the pastor, for any reason, does not fit into the accepted cultural mores of the community. I am faced with this personally, because I am a woman, and the culture of my church's community makes it difficult for men to accept spiritual leadership from me, even though the church has called me, and we both believe God has called me to fill the office of pastor in this particular church at this particular time.

The pastor is called and ordained of God to be the primary spiritual authority in the church. God holds the pastor ultimately responsible to himself. In other words, since I am the pastor, "the buck stops here," and I'm the one who has to answer to God when we, as a body, sin against him, especially so if I recognize something as sin, and stand back and allow it to continue unrebuked.

At the same time, the pastor is one of the flock, human, prone to error, who can also fall into sin. This is why the pastor must be accountable to the board, or the diaconate, or the elders.

We have an enemy who loves to destroy the lines of spiritual authority in God's churches.

Some principles for maintaining unity

One area where Satan works is the testimony or sharing time which offers individuals the opportunity to speak to the congregation about the ways they believe God is working in their lives. If properly used, this can be a time of great encouragement and edification for the body. But if this opportunity to mention God's blessings is misused or abused, it can be destructive. This is not a time to "preach," nor to replay for the umpteenth consecutive week the blessings of long ago, although there may occasionally be a place for that. Those who share must be considerate of others by not using so much time that others are not comfortable to speak.

Principle: Testimony time in the worship service is a time to share how we have seen God working this week, or since we were last together.

In some churches, individuals who have not been delegated that authority, take it upon themselves to change the order of worship. This should never happen unless it has been cleared with the pastor and/or the worship leader. Our freedom to testify does not include the right to insert unplanned-for elements into the order of worship that may not fit the intended flow and direction, except at times when this kind of contribution is invited from the congregation. The authority to make changes may be delegated in advance, usually to the worship leader, but this authority should never be simply usurped by anyone.

Whenever anyone knowingly introduces some subject which will interfere with the moving of the Holy Spirit, the whole congregation may miss out on a blessing. When it is obvious that a spirit of praise and rejoicing is being developed through the witness of the congregation, that is *not* the time to bring up a local political issue that has upset many in the community, or to announce the date and time of the senior citizens' coming barbecue and craft fair. As worshipers and as members of a body of believers, we need to develop a sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit in the process of worship.

Principle: Unity of purpose is necessary for true worship. Turning the focus of worship away from the Lord grieves the Holy Spirit, and limits the blessing we can receive.

There will be especially hurtful situations whenever there is a stubborn and stiff-necked attitude on *anyone's* part where spiritual things are concerned. If it is on the pastor's part, the problem will be worse.

continued

Principle: Nurturing and defending our personal pride can be very expensive. Its price may very well be the end of our unity, and it is never pleasing or honoring to God.

Problems often arise in congregations simply because leaders and congregation alike have never learned nor been taught to respect the offices of pastor, elder, and diaconate. These are God-appointed offices of spiritual authority in the church. It is God's intent that his people honor and respect those offices and the people he has called to serve in them. That means no "sharing" of hard feelings, discontent, and malicious gossip with someone other than the person directly concerned (see Matt. 18:16-20). It means going to that person, in God's love, and trying to solve the problem together. It means refusing to attend unofficial meetings (read "gripe sessions") where the intent is to undermine the authority and the ministry of the pastor. It means being diligent to pray for the situation and the persons who are involved. It means refusing to use the enemy's methods to get our own way. It means discussing the perceived difficulty calmly, compassionately, and without letting our anger get out of control, knowing that "it is best to listen much, speak little, and not become angry; for anger doesn't make us good, as God demands that we must be" (James 1:19-20 LB).

If there are legitimate, apparently unresolvable problems between pastor and people, then together they should seek outside counsel from denominational leaders, always with a view to heal, not to wound any of those involved.

Principle: Respecting the offices of pastor, elder, and deacon enables the Holy Spirit to work through pastor and laypeople alike to build up and strengthen the church.

Many unsuspecting pastors have found themselves involved in a battle which they didn't see coming, which left them, and often their families, or even their ministry critically wounded. This is a kind of guerrilla warfare that erupts when someone new to a church and its community touches, moves, changes, or heaven forbid, removes completely, some artifact which was originally given as a gift to the church, usually in memory of someone now gone.

The gift may have been given with the intent to honor God, but with passing time, has become an idol to hallow someone's memory. Many churches are full of such memorabilia, and often these things draw attention and honor away from Jesus Christ, who alone should be honored and exalted in his own house. Sometimes, these gifts are simply presented to the church without any decision on the part of the leadership. And all too often they become sacred cows which cannot be touched, whether or not they are pleasing to God. After all, how can a church refuse an unsuitable and/or unwanted gift without hurting or alienating the giver?

Money, also, is sometimes given with certain ends in mind, allowing the giver to manipulate the use of funds for their own ends. Hopefully this is not often the case, but occasionally it does happen, and these things do more to damage than to strengthen God's people and the work of the Kingdom.

Principle: Gifts to the church should never be used to counter the expressed will of the body. They should bring honor to God.

One of the most common problems churches have, one that is inevitably destructive to the unity and well-being of the church and to the joy and satisfaction of the individual members, is a persistent refusal to communicate the right thing to the right person(s) at the right time and place. I think one of the more frustrating problems that any pastor faces, is trying to elicit honest, open expressions of feelings and opinions from people who seem to be afraid that if they disagree with the pastor or with

He Lives In You

I didn't see the radiant star shining in
Bethlehem's skies;
But I've seen the radiance of his love, shining
in your eyes.

I didn't hear the angels sing of " peace, goodwill
toward men,"
But when you prayed for me today, I felt that
peace within.

I didn't see the baby Jesus lying on the hay,
But I saw Him smiling at me when you smiled
at me today.

I wasn't there to witness that God really came,
you know,
But witnessing his love in you, I know it must
be so.

I wasn't there to bring Him gifts, but I can give
to you
The gift of love, his precious love, reflected back
to you.

Jesus is here—let's celebrate!

—Joanne H. Hunter

each other, they will "make trouble," hurt someone's feelings, or make someone angry.

Actually, the opposite is the case. Disagreement, even among earnest Christians, is inevitable. Lack of proper communication, however, is *not* inevitable. What is important is that we learn to express our opinions graciously, and to disagree agreeably. These are skills that can be learned, and that, when practiced, will strengthen the unity of the church. On the other hand, all of us must also learn to hear other people's differing opinions and give them prayerful consideration.

Few folks are willing to speak out if they have been put down or overwhelmed by others' emotional responses. Because of this, leaders who are chairing or facilitating committee meetings should be responsible to see that all opinions are open to being heard and considered without being subject to responses that could easily be perceived as a personal attack.

Principle: Opinions and feelings should be openly and graciously expressed in the appropriate committee or board meeting, not held in, stewed over, or complained about outside. Differing opinions should be received graciously, and considered prayerfully.

Love God and love people

If all of God's people were willing and able to give the rest of God's people the benefit of the doubt, to "always believe in [each other], and always stand [their] ground defending [each other]," (1 Cor. 13 LB), ninety percent of the problems in our churches would be eliminated.

God, in his omniscience, knew how hard it would be for his children to live together in unity. And in his compassion and grace, he provided us with his own guidelines for interpersonal relationships. He carefully spells out for us what it means to live together in love.

No, that's not the way the world operates. But it's the way God intends the church of Jesus Christ to operate. He said that the two most important commandments were to love him and to love each other. I remember reading years ago that, whenever there were problems in a church, it was because someone, or perhaps several someones, thought that there was *something else* that was more important than loving God, and loving their brother.

Whenever any of God's children act on that lie of Satan, we will continue to have churches that shoot their wounded over issues that have no eternal significance, and we will continue to focus on survival when revival is within our reach.

May the Lord who is the Head of his church give us the grace to disagree agreeably, and to deal with our mutual problems, not as the world would, but as the children of his that we claim to be. ❑

Joanne Hunter serves as pastor of the Castle Hill, Maine, Advent Christian Church.

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education gained by this experience has created in me a thirst for answers. I want answers to practical questions, which, before this internship, I was not aware of.

I have pastored before, and had a reasonably good confidence in my abilities in that area. But, as for missions, I really did not know if I could "take it." This experience has shown me that I am missionary material. I was able to interact with students, in spite of a language barrier, and lead them toward a better understanding of the word of God, and their ministries for Him. That confidence, however, has been tempered with an understanding of the complexities of the missions task which only working on a specific field can bring. I will bring the problems I faced back with me to the "drawing board" where I began, and seek to make corrections in the blueprint I have been working on.

What is next

Now I face another year of studies at CIU, and an attempt to find answers to the questions I have come back with. I have experienced the thrill of teaching the word of God at OBC, and the chance to be an encouragement to the students there. Now I return with gratitude to some Advent Christian churches at home who made the trip possible. I especially want to thank the Columbia, S.C., Advent Christian Church for letting their pastor go on sabbatical, and the McAlpin, Fla., Advent Christian Church who supported my wife and children while I was away. Thanks also for all of you who were praying. Our Father took special care of me, and I could tell that you were praying. ❑

Jeff Vann is a graduate student in Missions at Columbia International University in South Carolina. He graduated from Berkshire Christian College and hopes to enter career mission service upon graduation.

Christmas Reflections

Linda Leavitt
Deer Isle, Maine

IT IS EARLY November as I put together my thoughts and words for this article. As usual, our home has already begun to fill up with brightly colored packages, and Christmas carols are playing softly in the background. This is typical for me and my family, but perhaps you are wondering why?

Christmas is the season of the year when most hearts begin to turn towards home, and warm thoughts and memories flood the mind and soul. This is perhaps the only time of year when I think of home, the home I grew up in, and the thoughts are warm and the memories are good.

One of the fondest memories of Christmas is that of my brothers and sisters. There were eight of us, and as money was hard to come by in the best of times, the added expense of Christmas meant that we had to learn creative ways to earn the money desired to make the holiday special. We lived in the country, and my father, a woodsman, owned some woodland close to our home. So at Christmastime we all started working in early November, selecting trees to cut and cutting the branches to make Christmas wreaths. It was a family project in which each of us had a part. Mom made wreaths, dad sold Christmas trees, and we helped with every aspect (cutting the trees, carrying them out of the woods, and selling Christmas wreaths door-to-door). For years this was the only way we could afford to have gifts at Christmas, and the wonderful holiday feast mom and dad would provide on Christmas Eve, (my birthday!), and Christmas Day. (I wish I could go back and do it all over again!)

But the best gift we received at Christmas, every year without fail, was the gift my father gave to us all. For this was the one time of the year when he would put up the bottle. And that he was able to do this (being a chronic alcoholic), for nearly two months every year, is still a marvel to me. This has always added to my "wonder" of Christmas, as I know this was an impossibility for him to accomplish on his own. And the Christmas season was often the only hope and joy we had to carry us through the often bad times of the rest of the year.

As wonderful as that gift my father gave to me was, in the winter of 1976, my heavenly Father gave to me the greatest gift of all, the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ, as my Lord and Savior. And what a wonder it is, to be able to celebrate Christmas every day of the year! And what a joy it has been to pass all this along to my own family, and to others God has brought my way.

Perhaps you can see now why in early November I once again feel that tug at my heart to prepare for this wondrous season, and the wonderful day we call Christmas, and why I love Christmas so very much! For I love the Christ of Christmas, and he has put all the pieces of my life and experience together! Praise his wonderful Name! ❑

The World Begins Next Door

"Go ye into all the world," said He.
To the disciples, to you, and to me.
"All the world!" we say—
"There isn't any way!"

But the world begins with the one next door.
And the one on the very next floor,
The one on the bus,
The ones right in the midst of us.

So do a kind deed to plant the seed.
Put on a smile as you go the second mile.
Start following Jesus' command today.
Help someone next door find the way.

—Karen Creecy

Karen Creecy is active at First Advent Christian Church in Santa Cruz, Calif.

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus!

Miriam Snow Priebe

THIS LAST SUNDAY I went with friends to a church of another denomination. They were celebrating the season of Advent. One of the hymns we sang was *Come Thou Long Expected Jesus*. I don't think we sing that particular song very often in our Advent Christian churches; but it's a marvelous hymn. I have found myself humming the tune and thinking about the words all week.

Friends of ours recently adopted a little boy. The announcements they sent out had the following message:

"I wasn't expected. I was selected."

Jesus was both expected and selected—expected by many generations of faithful Israelites and selected by God. He was selected to free all people from their fears—to deliver us from the bondage of sin. Jesus was selected to reign!

When we sing this beautiful hymn as a prayer we are asking our Lord to come to us; and we are expecting that after he comes, things will be different. No fear is too small and foolish to ask him to take from us. No sin is too large and terrible to ask him to forgive.

In this Advent hymn we are also asking him to be rulers of our lives. This means turning over our plans for his inspection. It means obedience to his commands as we understand them in the gospels. This is not easy!

However, the last two lines of the hymn remind us of our Lord's own words (Rev. 3:21), "To those who win the victory I will give the right to sit by me on my throne. . ."

If anyone should sing and appreciate this hymn, it is an Advent Christian who has been brought up to look for Christ's return and to rejoice in what he did for us in his first coming! I suggest that this hymn would be a good addition to the songs we sing in the period before Christmas. Anyway I am singing *Come Thou Long Expected Jesus* with thanksgiving-thanksgiving that Jesus came to save me and that he is coming again! ❑

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cultural identity.

French Canadian politicians like longtime prime minister Pierre Trudeau and current leader Jean Chretian have long argued that strong federal government provides the best way politically and economically for both English- and French-speaking Canadians. In their view, the best way to preserve Quebec's distinctive cultural identity is federal policy that treats the English and French languages equally and mandates equality for both English and French speakers. But that strategy is now opposed by Quebec separatists like Bouchard and deputy Quebec premier Bernard Landry, and perhaps by the majority of French speaking people in Quebec. In their view, a Quebec independent of Canada is the only way to preserve their distinct culture.

Unity or separation?

So where does Canada go from here? Like most Americans, I hope that Canada will remain united. Quebec independence would be bad both for Quebec and for the rest of Canada. And as evidenced by the bizarre statements of former Quebec premier and separatist leader Jacques Parizeau that money and ethnic voters were behind their October defeat, French Canadian separatists have yet to deal with some prejudices that may be stronger within their movement than they would like to admit.

But English-speaking Canadians have work to do as well. The Bible recognizes the value of culture and the desire of French-speaking Canadians to maintain their distinctive identity is not wrong. Perhaps the best way to do that will be for Canadians to reject the strong federalism of Trudeau and Chretian in favor of policies that give Canada's ten provinces much more control of their internal affairs.

But whatever direction Canada takes in the coming years, it's important both for Canadian and American Christians to recognize that while national citizenship and cultural identity are important, in Christ we are now to use Paul's words "fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household." Our ultimate citizenship lies not in Quebec, in Canada, or in the United States but in God's kingdom. May we live our lives in a way that people "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev 5:9) will hear the good news of God's love for them. ❑

Not Revival, but Chris-tians who are Revived

Kristen Dame
N. Scituate, R.I.

Editor's Note: One of the most significant events within American Christianity during 1995 has been the outbreak of revival on Christian college campuses. Advent Christian student Kristen Dame shares her first-hand report about how God moved at the school she attends, Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois.

SINCE 1969, people have been praying and looking for a mass revival on the campus of Wheaton College. The word "revival" has been tossed around so much here it had almost taken on an evil taint. Saying the term was likely to have you labeled a fanatic. (Yes, these things happen even on a Christian college campus.) Anyway, that's the setting.

Late last year, God began moving in great ways at Howard Payne College, a Christian campus in Texas. Students came forward en masse and began publicly confessing their sins. Classes were canceled to allow the Spirit of God full freedom to move. Revival had, indeed, occurred. But it didn't stop at Howard Payne. The Lord worked at a local middle school through a group of seventh grade girls. As a result, many junior high young people were won for Christ. It was exhilarating.

Back to Wheaton. Every Sunday, from 7:00 p.m. to around 9:30 p.m., we have WCF (short for World Christian Fellowship). It usually begins with a time of singing praise songs to prepare our hearts for worship. Then we have a guest speaker who addresses us. We end with prayer and some more choruses. It can be a beautiful time if your heart is centered on the Lord.

I am on sound crew for WCF. We start our work at 4:00 p.m. and get done somewhere in the vicinity of 10:00. I am sorry to admit that, most of the time, my heart was not focused on praising God. I was more concerned with learning about the sound equipment or lighting. March 19, 1995, was no different. I knew we were having two students speak about their experiences in the Howard Payne revival. The worship leader said WCF might run over, but it might not. One can't manipulate the Spirit of God. I had the impression we would be out of there by 11:00 p.m. by the latest.

> **Not once was there the slightest lull as hundreds of Wheaton students humbled themselves before God and their brothers and sisters in Christ.**

For a while I thought about setting up, leaving, and returning at the end to tear down. Finally I decided to stay. After all, if something did happen, it would be cool to see.

I wasn't expecting much

WCF started as usual. Pierce Chapel was a little fuller than usual, and there seemed to be an air of expectation. But that happened from time to time. Brandy and James, the two Howard Payne students, took turns sharing about their experience on the campus. I won't take the space to relate any of the stories, but they were the kind all good revival histories are made of. They opened up the microphones for anyone who had questions or felt led to make a public confession of sins. I frankly wasn't expecting much. O, ye of little faith!

A friend of mine got up and began confessing sin in his life to the whole group of around 400 students (not to mention the chaplain and the dean of student programs). That's when it started. Two lines of students formed, one down each side aisle, who were waiting to confess sins publicly. I remember only a few of the sins confessed. The only reason they stick with me is that I better understood my

friends and how to be a better friend to them.

I sat in my seat as people I knew went to wait in line. My knees started feeling like jello and my stomach felt like it was being tied in a million knots. I sensed God telling me to get down there and do some confessing of my own. But I resisted. After all, forgiveness is freely given whether the sin is openly confessed or not. Still, I couldn't rest. A fierce battle ensued, but my pride was finally conquered. I left the balcony and went to stand in line, unsure of what I was going to say when I made it to the microphone.

I had plenty of time to think. Nearly an hour passed before I stood, shaking, in front of so many of my friends. My hands tightly clenched in front of me, I confessed my sins as Christ revealed them to me. I didn't mention all of them, most of them were only generalizations, but that was all right. After I finished, I felt shaken to my core. Nothing was hidden now; I was completely vulnerable. But I had been obedient, and it felt wonderful.

As a part of my confession, there were some people I needed to personally ask forgiveness for the way I had treated them. It was hard. I have always had a miserable time trying to humble myself before others. In fact, I think that's why God made me speak. It wasn't so much what I had to say as it was my need to be submissive to God's will.

I'm not going to give stories of the sins confessed, neither mine or others. Their purpose has been served. I will simply tell you what happened last night. That WCF meeting, which started at 7:35 p.m., ended at 6:00 a.m. on Monday, March 20, 1995.

I was there for all of it. It was incredible. Not once was there the slightest lull as hundreds of Wheaton students humbled themselves before God and their brothers and sisters in Christ. When it did end, there were still individuals who desired a chance to share. As a result, more meetings were held on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday nights. We had to move to a nearby local church that seats 1,500 people. Thursday night was an amazing time of thanksgiving, praise, and dedication to God.

The greatest part of this whole experience, however, is the change I've witnessed. People on campus are more open. We're attending prayer groups and Bible studies, making time with God a priority. And we're supporting each other as we strive to be like Christ.

This is what the world needs. Not a "revival," but Christians who are revived. Servants who realize that they are the most blessed people in the world. Humble people helping others find the glorious richness of a life lived for Christ. ❑

Kristen Dame is a student at Wheaton College and a member of the Advent Christian Church in N. Scituate, R.I. During the summers, she helps with the family farm, and this last summer, she provided special care for her great-grandfather.

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E

S E E K

K N O W

January

1 Praise God for a **new year** and for new opportunities that we have to serve him.

2 Pray that 1996 will be a year of **rich blessing** for Advent Christian people and congregations around the world.

3 Praise God for the opportunities that **Russell and Noelle Carle** are having to work with two congregations in New Zealand.

4 Pray that God will give **Russell and Noelle** wisdom and strength as they endeavor to communicate the gospel in a highly secularized nation.

5 Praise God for the partnership that Advent Christians enjoy with the **Conditional Immortality Association** in New Zealand.

6 Pray for Asia/Pacific Area Director **George Teshera** as he works with Advent Christian national leaders and missionaries.

7 Praise God for the wonderful response of Advent Christian people and congregations to **Penny Crusade** and **United Ministries** in 1995.

8 Pray that Advent Christians will know God's presence in a special way as they gather this June in Tampa for the **triennial delegate meetings**.

9 Praise God for the over 100 years of ministry that Advent Christians have carried on in the nation of **India**.

10 Pray that God will give wisdom and direction as Advent Christian **mission leaders** wrestle with serious problems connected with our ministry in **India**.

11 Praise God that **Steven and Ann Lay** have returned to Japan and are once again active in their church-planting ministry.

12 Pray that the Lord will provide **Steven and Ann** with opportunities to communicate God's love to Japanese people in Kobe.

13 Praise God for the opportunities that **Karen Rigney** has to communicate the love of Christ to people with whom she comes in contact in Japan.

14 Pray for **Karen** as she continues her language study.

15 Praise God for the ministry that **Japanese** Advent Christian pastors and churches have in their communities.

16 As residents of the **Kobe** area of Japan mark the anniversary of last year's major earthquake, pray that God's people there will continue to make a positive impact on their community.

17 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Oro Bible College** continues to have in preparing Filipino Advent Christians for ministry and Christian service.

18 Pray that God will richly bless the work of Philippine missionaries **Warren Prestidge**, **Margaret Helms**, and **David Vignali**.

19 Praise God for the work that **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** continue to do with the Advent Christian congregation in El Florido, Mexico.

20 Pray that the Lord will raise up national missionaries for Advent Christian church planting work in **Mexico**.

21 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Tecate Bible College** continues to have in preparing Mexican nationals from a variety of denominations and organizations for church planting throughout their nation.

22 Pray that God will raise up missionaries to open the projected Advent Christian mission field in **Honduras**.

23 Praise God today for the work and ministry of **your pastor**.

24 Pray that God will give direction and guidance to a number of Advent Christian congregations currently seeking **pastoral leadership**.

25 Praise God for the church planting ministry of Pastor **Amos Gbaa** in the West African nation of Ghana.

26 Pray that God would use Advent Christian ministry in **Nigeria** and **Liberia** to touch lives for Jesus Christ.

27 Praise God for the over 500 Advent Christian **college and university students** studying at campuses across the United States.

28 Pray that God will give wisdom and strength to World Mission Director **Harold Patterson** for his work today.

29 Praise God for his grace and mercy expressed through **Jesus Christ**.

30 Pray that God will give guidance and direction for members of the General Conference **Executive Council** gather for their upcoming meetings.

31 Praise God for the many **faithful Christians** across the world who worship Jesus Christ as Lord today.

Obey!

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The mystery of God's workings

I do not know exactly what God had in mind at the memorial service at Rothko Chapel that day—or at the Jewish seminar at the Houstonian. But I am confident that God knows, and that his Word "will not return to him void." I also know that I could never have imagined, in all my preceding years, some day sharing the gospel with either audience.

What is most thrilling is the realization that the heavenly Father used simple obedience in the daily lives of ordinary people to bring about both opportunities. Bob and Beth had no specific agenda when they showed love to Mike; they simply made themselves available to Christ and his love overflowed through them. I was not attempting to "evangelize" when I represented the FDIC in its suit against Alan's client. I simply tried to conduct myself in a Christian manner that would honor God.

In a day when we are often obsessed with methods and programs, with organized plans and specialized activities, we need to remember that God's power is still the only force which can draw women and men to Jesus Christ. Most often, God accomplishes his purpose through the mundane affairs of his people as they attempt to obey him in the small details of their daily lives.

Learning to watch and pray

Nor do we need to wait for unusual audiences such as the two I have described in this chapter in order to share the gospel. These are extreme examples and I relate them only to illustrate that there is no person God cannot reach, no group he does not love. I have been a very slow learner, but it has been a great blessing to me in recent years to discover that opportunities to witness await us almost every day—on the street, at the job, during a doctor's visit, over the coffee table, or in the middle of a round of golf.

As we live close to God, he will make our paths cross with others who he knows are seeking him. If we live prayerfully, and keep alert, we can see openings for planting gospel seed, and, in God's strength and wisdom, take advantage of them to his glory. We do not need to worry about results. It is our job to be faithful in small details, then be ready to speak as God gives us opportunity. We may be sure that God will accomplish whatever pleases him. And—wonder of wonders—sometimes he uses people like us! ❑

Edward Fudge is an attorney and the author of *The Fire That Consumes*. This is excerpted from his new book *Beyond the Sacred Page* (Providential Press, 1995). Copyright © 1995 by Edward Fudge, and used by permission.

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

Was there any fruit from those early attempts at preaching the gospel? At least the worker was learning much, not only in regard to the language but in understanding the ways and the thoughts of the people among whom we were living. Foundation work does not show. We want people to listen to our message, but they feel the need of watching our lives to see whether the message is worth listening to.

—Bertha E. Cassidy

All our emotions find their final object of focus in Him...at the root of all joy is the wonder of redemption; at the core of all difficult emotion is the question, "God, are You good?"

—Dan Allender and Tremper Longman

We need to remember that it is usually in periods of momentous crisis that great revivals are born. Our sense of helplessness, properly directed, actually can make us more sensitive to the need for supernatural grace.

—Robert Coleman

Accept the goodness of Jesus Christ. Abandon your own works and accept his. Abandon your own decency and accept his. Stand before God in his name, not yours... Is it that simple? It's that simple. It's that easy? There was nothing easy about it. The cross was heavy, the blood was real, and the price was extravagant. It would have bankrupted you or me, so he paid it for us. Call it simple. Call it a gift. But don't call it easy. Call it what it is. Call it grace.

—Max Lucado

More than ever, Father, I am determined to be at home in your Scriptures, so that nothing other people can do will throw me off the track of following you. I will see everything, even those things that look absolutely disastrous to me, in the context of your providence, which steadily moves to redemption. In Jesus name. Amen.

—Eugene Peterson

But, of course, being a Christian does mean thinking that where Christianity differs from other religions, Christianity is right and they are wrong. As in arithmetic—there is only one right answer to a sum, and all other answers are wrong: but some of the wrong answers are much nearer being right than others.

—C.S. Lewis

The process of joining Christ's body may at first seem like a renunciation. I no longer have full independence. Ironically, however, renouncing my old value system—in which I had to compete with other people on the basis of power, wealth, and talent—and committing myself to Christ... abruptly frees me. My sense of competition fades. No longer do I have to bristle against life, seizing ways to prove myself. In my new identity my ideal has become to live my life in such a way that people around me recognize Jesus Christ and His love, not my own set of distinctive qualities. My worth and acceptance are enveloped in Him. I have found this process of renunciation and commitment to be healthy, relaxing, and wholly good.

—Paul Brand

Sources: Allender and Longman in *The Cry of the Soul*, 43; Bertha Cassidy in *China Adventure*, 19; Robert Coleman in *The Coming World Revival*, xiv; Max Lucado in *A Gentle Thunder*, 137; Eugene Peterson in *Praying With the Early Christians*; C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*, 43; Paul Brand in *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*, 48; Jack Deere in *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*, 86.

In Other Words

It has been my observation that God does not normally violate the prejudices of religious pride. Many of the Pharisees went to their deaths absolutely convinced in the validity of their own traditions and predjudices. Their religious pride shut them off from the correction that God would so willingly given them, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5).

The tragedy is that many of their doctrines were biblical and true. Yet I would rather have some wrong doctrines and humility than to have perfect orthodoxy on every point and no humility. A person who has wrong doctrine and humility can be corrected. A person with mostly right doctrines and no humility will be resisted by the Lord he professes to serve.

—Jack Deere

Correction

In the article *What Jesus Would Say to Rush Limbaugh* (November 1995 *Advent Christian Witness*, page four), we omitted the biographical sketch and article credit that should have appeared at the end of the article.

Lee Strobel serves on the pastoral staff at Willow Creek Community Church in S. Barrington, Ill. His article is taken from *What Jesus Would say to: Rush Limbaugh, Madonna, Bill Clinton, Michael Jordan, Bart Simpson, Donald Trump, Murphy Brown, Madalyn Murray, Mother Teresa, David Letterman, and You!* Copyright 1994 by Lee Strobel and used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.

We apologize for our error.

Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
891 Queen St. #60
Southington, CT 06489

Marion Damon (March 27)
891 Queen St. #60
Southington, CT 06489

Beryl Joy Hollis (December 16)
39B Belmont Terrace
Milford
North Shore City
NEW ZEALAND

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Warren Prestidge
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Margaret Helms (September 18)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-794-62-8744

Karen Rigney (June 5)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-794-62-8744

New Zealand

Russell and Noelle Carle
(December 30 and December 19)
(Ryan, November 15, 1979)
(Emily, June 23, 1983)
(Peter, August 14, 1991)
11 Rosehill Dr.
Papakura
Auckland 1702
NEW ZEALAND

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
Bududuram Refugee Camp
National Mobilization Program
Box 46
Accra, GHANA

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

Liberia and China
Our pastor in China
(September 30 and October 26)
All correspondence should be channelled through the missions office.

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devasahayam
Beulah Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Rev. T. and Victoria Devairakkam
33, Jalan Intan 4/1
Taman Intan,
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Mexico

Carlos Quintero
387 W. Poppyfields Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
(818) 791-2447

Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Carlos Quintero

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Vice-president
Harold Patterson; World Missions
Millie Griswold; Resource Development

P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

Russell Giasson; Services
Robert Mayer; Publications
Brent Carpenter; Church Relations

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Advent Christian
WITNESS

January/February 1996

RACIAL RECONCILIATION



Three perspectives on understanding race relations in America

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Pastor Adrian Shepard recounts what God has taught him about racial reconciliation and challenges Advent Christians to take the lead in building relationships that transcend racial and ethnic barriers.

To Be Young...American...and Black 6

What is it like to grow up as an African-American in the United States? John Perkins relates his experience and his discovery that in Jesus' eyes, he was a valuable human being, created in God's image.

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In this first of a series of articles dealing with Advent Christian understandings of important doctrinal and theological themes, Babu Ranganathan offers a fresh perspective of what the Bible teaches concerning the fate of those who die apart from Jesus Christ.
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Racial and ethnic tension has grown during the 1990s. How should we as Christians respond?

photo by Jim and Mary Whitmer

Volume 44, Number 1

Advent Christian WITNESS

Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy, Timothy Setzer, Linda Leavitt**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria



Is Justice Possible?

"WE FIND the defendant, Orenthal James Simpson, not guilty. . ." Like many of you, I made sure my schedule for that day included a few minutes to watch the verdict and the subsequent reaction. And like many of you, I formed some strong opinions not only about the trial but about its impact on the criminal justice system in the United States.

But what intrigued me most was how differently black and white Americans perceived the verdict. Many whites viewed the evidence against Simpson as overwhelming and were shocked by the verdict. But for many blacks, the verdict was just because in their view that same evidence had been compromised by corrupt and racist law-enforcement officers. These two very different responses to the Simpson verdict point to something that most of us don't want to face—that race continues to be our most vexing ongoing social problem. And it's a problem that has become much more complex since the 1960s.

As a society, we have given up on any notion of a common culture grounded in justice, equality, and liberty.

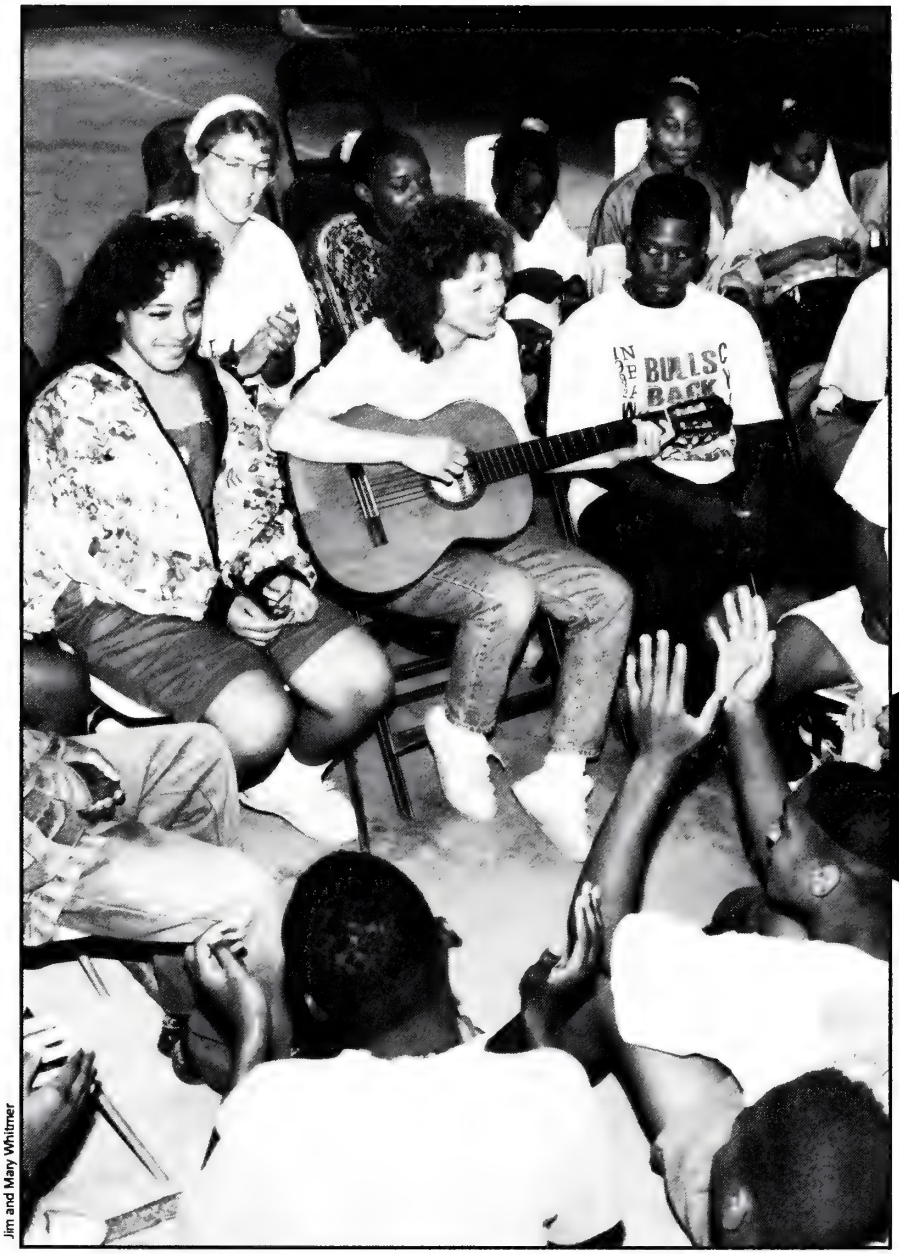
Before then, the United States was essentially a biracial society with a distinct American cultural ideal. As the Civil Rights movement emerged after World War II, many African-American leaders believed that a moral appeal to the American ideals of freedom, justice, and equality would not only bring an end to legal segregation and discrimination, but would provide a brighter economic future for African-Americans. But while a sizable African-American middle class has emerged, millions have become trapped not only in poverty but in cultural isolation in America's inner cities.

In the words of *Atlantic Monthly* correspondent Nicholas Lemann, the United States has become "fragmented into constituencies that look out for their own interests." As a society, we have given up on any notion of a common culture grounded in justice, equality, and liberty in favor of vague notions of cultural pluralism governed by a host of special interest groups. What impoverished inner-city Americans need, according to Lemann, "is to move closer to the mainstream of American life, socially and economically, but assimilation is no longer the national creed."

Lemann is right on both counts. And perhaps that is why there is so much frustration over issues surrounding race among Americans. In a society where individualism predominates and special interests are the norm, how do we deal constructively with race and ethnicity? There are hopeful signs that evangelical Christians are wrestling with this issue. Last year, the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution apologizing for its past role in defending slavery and racial separation in America. Promise Keepers has made racial reconciliation a focal point in its ministry to men.

But these and other initiatives by evangelicals will be short-lived unless American Christians grasp what the Scriptures teach about justice and practice racial reconciliation in their lives and in their churches. We think of justice mostly in legal terms, as the Simpson trial so well demonstrated. But the Bible teaches that justice has economic dimensions as well. King Solomon describes this well: "By justice, a king gives a country stability, but one who is greedy for bribes tears it down. . . The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern " (Proverbs 29:4;7). To use John Perkins' words, justice involves "our ability to manage the creation in a way that the fewest of people are left out." When we pursue justice, we use the resouces of God's creation in a way that makes them open and available to all.

Are evangelicals and Advent Christians up to that task? Will we settle for prejudice and a growing disregard for the poor? Or will we use the resources God has given us in a way that promotes biblical justice and serves as visible demonstration of the gospel's power? ❑



Jim and Mary Whitmer

Isolation or Reconciliation?

Adrian Shepard
Wilmington, N.C.

RECENTLY while waiting for a prescription to be filled, I struck up a conversation with an older African-American man who was also waiting. As we talked it was apparent that he knew many of the people and family with whom I grew up in the segregated South. Then he told me a story.

Back during World War 2, when there were restrictions on the purchase of many things including vehicles, he had his name on a list for the purchase of a new truck. He was a successful businessman on the southern North Carolina seacoast and a truck was vital to his livelihood. Through his business he had a friendship with a white businessman in another community, who also had his name on the list for a new truck.

The white businessman's turn came up, but not needing a truck at that moment, he let his black friend take his place and buy himself the new truck.

As he told me this fifty-year-old story, he had a smile on his face and a gleam in his eye. He was aware that many of the white folks on the list were puzzled and amazed that a black man had his truck first in the white-dominated society of the 1940s.

"You can't eat there"

Herbert and I pulled into the drive-in restaurant at Third and Dawson in Wilmington, N.C. This black man and I had worked together for a number of years and had developed a good friendship. When the waitress came to the vehicle and took our order, she commented, "you can order, but you cannot eat here."

I don't think I was the dumbest kid in town, but I didn't catch what the waitress meant. What she said floated over the top of my head. We remained at the restaurant and had our lunch without incident.

In the mid-1950s, I was naive about the conflict between blacks and whites in the United States and the negative impact it had on people of color. Yes, I knew that there were two high schools, one black and one white. I knew that all the people on my bus were white. I knew that all people in my church were white. But, I had no clue about what it meant to live as a

black person in a white-dominated society.

Herbert did, and so did the man who told me the story in the drugstore. A story of winning in a society where winning was not easy was a significant story. Eating at a restaurant where blacks were not allowed to eat was not as casual an incident for my friend as it was for a naive teenager.

But there was at least one plus in that naive response of a southern teenager in a segregated society. My parents, my church, and my peers had not engraved an active prejudice and racial disdain on my heart. At least there had been the avoidance of an active hatred and disrespect for black people.

My world becomes bigger

However, missing from my life was a commitment to an active relationship with people of color. For the most part there was my world and their world, and there was no active attempt to bridge that divide. It's not enough to feel no hatred, no prejudice, or racial disdain; for us to bring reconciliation and relationship among people, we must take action. We must step more deeply into each other's communities.

It's not enough to feel no hatred, no prejudice, or racial disdain; for us to bring reconciliation and relationship among people, we must take action.

During my second year of college that opportunity came through an invitation to share each week in the ministry of Hope Church (A.C.) in Chicago. The community around Hope Church had become primarily African-American. And some people within the church had made a conscious decision against white flight and had made a commitment to minister for our Lord in that community.

My decision to drive in each week to teach, visit, and occasionally preach was much easier than that of those who chose to remain in the community and be the church. But my decision did provide for me experience of active reconciliation and relationship. Never in my life had there been an opportunity for personal involvement in an African-American community. That community became Bob, Bernice, Aaron, Fred, George, and many others.

My world became a lot bigger. My world became a lot more colorful. The people of Hope Church taught me how to live with people who had been absent from my world. I can assure you that the people of Hope Church taught me much.

They taught me that black people love our Lord just like white people. They taught me that some African-Americans have a passion for winning people to Jesus Christ just as some white people. They taught me that black people hurt just like white people. They taught me tolerance. They taught me friendship. They demonstrated to me that there is no superiority of one race over another.

My experience in Hope Church was a crucial spiritual laboratory for dealing with my own social distance from African-Americans. It was a fellowship with a part of the body of Christ that was entirely new for me. It was a step beyond the passive lifestyle of an "I really don't hate you" attitude. It was a step into active relationships across racial lines, and, I believe, a real reconciliation in my own heart.

But neither was that enough. During the mid-1960s in my first pastorate, (in fact, during my first board meeting), the question was raised: "What will we do if black people come to worship at our church?" The issue was discussed but never fully resolved. The church took no negative action, but neither would it become pro-active for ministry across racial lines.

It was during that first three years as a pastor that the conviction of God's Spirit brought me to a new commitment. It was a commitment that I could not conscientiously pastor a church that did not have an open-door policy for ministry to all people. That commitment was agreed to when entering a second pastorate and it led me to another level of commitment to an inter-racial community.

The local church had to face a decision regarding a church-sponsored program that served both blacks and whites in our community. Out of its fear of negative reaction, the church board was ready to reject the program for that reason. Thus, officially it would have confirmed that the church did not, in fact, practice its so-called "open door" policy.

I found it necessary to take a stand since such action would have violated their original agreement that the church would minister to everyone. After being reminded of its policy, the board was willing to remain committed to its open-door policy. But that commitment did not mean an active relationship across racial lines, and we continued to lack the initiative to build bridges in any significant way with the African-American churches and community. But some of us did that on a personal level and one place that provided that for me was through the local association of ministers. God was still teaching me about racial reconciliation.

Building bridges

In 1982, God provided an opportunity to me that symbolized that nature of Christian relationships across racial lines, and confirmed in my mind the "bodiness" of Christian faith. During an early morning prayer group in Osaka, Japan, a group of Japanese Christians gathered around to pray for me. There was a powerful sense of community. As they prayed, I could not understand a word they said except the name "Shepard." But the powerful sense of God's Spirit was there. The tremendous sense of oneness in

continued on page 13



Jim and Mary Whitmer

To Be Young, American... AND BLACK

John Perkins
Altadena, Calif.

THIS IS the greatest country in the world.

Never before in the history of mankind has there been a nation that has given her people so much in terms of freedom, possibilities and opportunities. It is a thrill to be an American.

Unless you happen to be black.

America, you see, has always been a different place for those who have black skin. We are expected to know our place. We are supposed to be content with our lot and not expect a whole lot more out of life. We are supposed to get by on less than our fellow Americans who happen to be white.

That is the way it has been for most black folks in this country for the last three hundred-plus years, and changes are slow in coming—very slow.

Does it sound like I am bitter? I am not. Does it sound like I am exaggerating? I am not doing that either. All I am doing is telling the truth-a truth every black American knows from personal experience.

If you take issue with what I have said, there can be only one reason: You are white—which means you have most likely been spared a lot of things that are common to blacks.

Please believe me when I say I am not trying to make you angry, nor am I trying to point my finger at you and accuse you of something you did not do. But I do want to open your eyes to the way things are for far too many people in the United States.

I am talking about people in New York. In California. In Texas. In Illinois. In Mississippi.

They liked their odds

Yes, in Mississippi.

That is where I was born in 1930. It did not take me long to figure out I was a second-class citizen. Long before I was old enough to understand what a word like racism meant, I ran into the reality of it on the streets of my hometown.

If we were in town on a Saturday, for example, and we wanted a hamburger or hot dog, we could not just

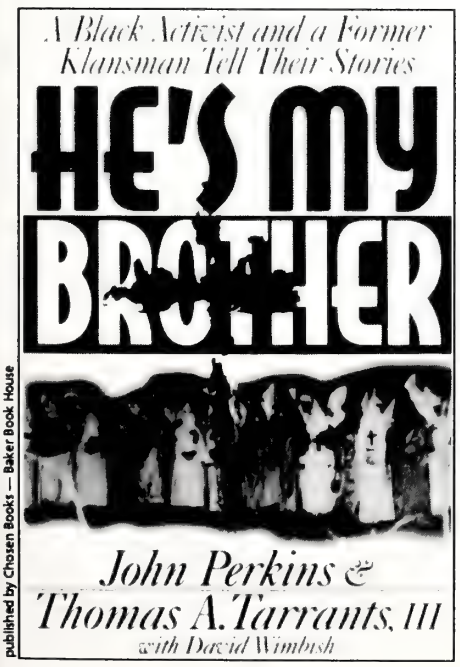
march up to the window and order one. We had to go through the alley to the back door, where we would practically have to beg before we could get anyone to notice us.

The white kids went to school in nice buildings where they had comfortable desks to sit in, well-trained teachers and brand-new textbooks. We went to school in run-down buildings with hand-me-down desks and textbooks and where, all too often, we had teachers who did not know much more about things than we did!

Then there were the school buses.

White kids got to ride to school in big, bright, shiny school buses. Sometimes those buses drove right up to their houses and picked them up. But that was not the way it was for us.

We had to walk to school. It did not matter how far away we lived—three miles, five miles. It did not matter if it was raining or snowing. If we were going to get to school, we had to walk. There was no other way to get there. It was hard sometimes, walking along, tired and cold, to see those white kids zip past us in their shiny yellow buses. It did not make them happy just to think they were riding to school while we had to walk. No, sir. They had to rub it in by bombarding us with spit wads from the windows of their bus, by making faces at us and sticking their tongues out. And, of course, by calling us names. There were lots of names—but the one I remember most is that universal favorite: "Nigger!"



You know, *nigger* is a word that has always been used in the South. Some white folks use it without a hint of anger or malice in their voices. Black folks are niggers, pure and simple, just as native Americans are Indians. But there is a time when the word *nigger* is used to tell men and women of color exactly who and what they are. The white person's lip curls into a sneer, his nostrils flare and he spits out the word as if it is the worst thing one human being could possibly call another: "Nigger!"

I do not mind telling you that I am proud to be a black American. But I never have been and never will be a nigger. I have never known a nigger. I have never even *met* a nigger. And if I could have my way, I would see to it that a curse was placed on that word so that nobody could ever use it again!

America, you see, has always been a different place for those who have black skin. We are expected to know our place.

But I have strayed from my subject—which is telling you what it was like to be a black child growing up in the Mississippi of the 1930s and '40s. . . The Ku Klux Klan was having a heyday keeping us in line. Beatings and lynchings were not uncommon. And it did not take much to anger the Klan.

If you were black, and a white person spoke to you, you had better answer back respectfully, and that meant saying, "Yes, sir" and "No, sir," "Yes, ma'am" and "No, ma'am." It did not matter if you were 70 years old and an 11-year-old child asked you a question. You still had to say, "Yes, sir" or "No, sir," just as if you were talking to a U.S. senator. To show disrespect to a white person in any way was almost akin to committing blasphemy or treason.

Sometimes the Klan, or Klan sympathizers, would beat or even kill someone just for the heck of it. I still do not know why. I suppose it was just to let us know that they were there, they were watching, and we had better toe the line.

I will never forget the time during my adolescence that a group of Klansmen decided, for no apparent reason, to "teach a lesson" to a friend of mine. I went to school with him, and we could not have been any more than 14 or 15 years old when it happened.

He was walking along the road to town, minding his own business, not causing a bit of trouble for anyone, when a carload of Klansmen spotted him. They liked their odds—six to one—and decided they wanted to "have some fun" with this nigger.

Their idea of having some fun was to jump him and beat him nearly half to death. But that was not enough. So while several of them held him down, one of the attackers got out his hunting knife and castrated him, while my friend screamed. Then they flung him into a ditch and went on their way.

Somehow the mutilated boy survived. Some people passing by saw him lying in the ditch, picked him up and took him to a hospital. But by then there was not much the doctors could do for him. He lived but he never recovered. He spent a couple of years lying in bed, and he has been paralyzed ever since.

Now I said that the attack was carried out by the Klan, and that may not be the exact truth. After all, nobody was ever charged with the crime, so it is impossible to say with certainty who did it. All I know is, unprovoked attacks of this type were not uncommon during those days, and if the people who carried them out were not actually members of the Klan, they were certainly following through on the spirit and style of the organization.



John Perkins

Bob Mayer — Advent Christian Witness

There was no arrest, of course, if an attack was carried out by a white person on a black person. Let it be the other way around, though, and an execution was sure to follow—either "legally" or at the hands of a lynch mob. That was just the way it was in the South of my youth.

Your brother is dead

My childhood was difficult, too, because my mama died when I was only seven months old. My daddy, overcome by his grief, abandoned me soon after that. But the primary reason my childhood was hard was, pure and simple, the color of my skin. Etched forever in my mind are two incidents that drove that point home to me (as if it needed driving home). One was a great and terrible tragedy. The other was almost insignificant in comparison, but for me a tragedy just the same.

The first incident was the murder of my brother Clyde by a white police officer.

I have told the story of Clyde's death before, but it does not get any easier with the telling. And what magnifies the pain for me is the realization that my brother's killing has been repeated many times. There have been hundreds, perhaps even thousands of other "Clydes" in this country—men who have met with the same senseless brutality.

My brother died on a summer's evening in 1946, an oppressively hot day in New Hebron, Mississippi—the kind of day that saps the strength from everyone and causes tempers to flare. Maybe the heat of the day contributed to what happened, but it was no excuse.

My brother had served his country during World War 2. He had been right in the thick of the fighting in Germany, where he was wounded. He had come back home with several combat ribbons and a Purple Heart.

That made him a hero to some of us. But not to the white folks in New Hebron. To them he was still just Clyde. And Clyde was, after all was said and done, a nigger. And some of the white folks did not like it that Clyde held his head up a bit higher than he was supposed to, that he looked them in the eye when he talked to them, that he did not shuffle and grin and say, "Yes, sir" or "No, sir" to people half his age.

On this summer afternoon, Clyde and his girlfriend, Emma, were in line waiting to see a movie at Carolyn's Theater in downtown New Hebron. We were not allowed to enter the theater through the front door, of course. We had to stand in line in a narrow alley that ran between the theater and the dime store next door, and buy our tickets at a box office set up at a side entrance that led upstairs to the balcony. It was whites-only territory downstairs.

I was a few blocks away at my friend Charlie's house, but from what I understand, the alley was getting crowded and people were getting impatient because the box office had not yet opened. Apparently there was some pushing and shoving in the crowd—nothing malicious, just some jostling brought on by the heat, the crowded conditions and impatience. A white deputy marshal was there to keep things under control.

"You niggers quiet down!" he shouted. He seemed to be speaking directly to Clyde.

Clyde's attention had been on his girlfriend, but now he turned around to face the deputy. Maybe he wanted to protest that he was not doing anything wrong. Maybe he wanted to ask the deputy if he knew when someone was going to open the box office. Whatever it was he wanted, the deputy decided that Clyde's posture represented a defiance of his authority, and he knew how to deal with defiance. He smacked Clyde a good one with his nightstick right across the side of his head.

Clyde put up his hands, as any man would, to defend himself.

The deputy apparently saw that as another sign of defiance and went to give Clyde another crack. But Clyde was not going to stand there and let the man beat him half to death, so he grabbed the nightstick in self-defense.

That was all the excuse the "law" needed. The deputy pulled his gun from its holster, took two steps back and fired two bullets into Clyde's stomach from almost point-blank range. Then he walked away. As far as he was concerned, Clyde could bleed to death right there in the alley.

I do not mind telling you that I am proud to be a black American. But I never have been and never will be a nigger. I have never even met a nigger.

Clyde did not die right away. A group picked him up and carried him across the street to the doctor's office. Naturally they had to take him in the back entrance.

A few blocks away, at Charlie's house, I remember a car squealing up and somebody shouting that Clyde had been shot. I thought at first I was hearing it wrong. Surely they could not be talking about my big brother, my hero! It could not be Clyde Perkins they were talking about.

I got to Dr. Langston's office as

soon as I could, and when I saw my brother, my heart shriveled up within me. I think I knew right away he was not going to make it, but I could not let myself believe it. His breathing was labored, and his eyes were dull, almost as if they were already beginning to lose the light.

"Please, brother," I begged him, "don't die!"

Bitter and angry tears burned my eyes, but I would not let them fall. The deputy who had shot my brother was in that doctor's office, too, looking on from a distance, cold and dispassionate, "keeping things under control. . ." I would not let myself cry in front of that man. I hated him too much to let him see me cry.

I also knew at that instant that if I had had a gun, I would have shot that man. If I had a gun with twenty bullets in it, I would have shot him twenty times. I can only thank God now that I did *not* have a gun.

I stroked Clyde's cheek as Dr. Langston worked on him. The doctor, who was white, seemed to be trying hard to save Clyde's life, but also looked moment by moment as if he was not going to win this battle.

Finally Dr. Langston shook his head.

"I've done all I can," he announced. The way he said it let us know immediately that he knew it was not enough. "You have to get him to the hospital."

Getting him to the hospital was not easy. It meant taking him all the way to Jackson, the state capital, which was nearly ninety minutes away, partly over rough gravel roads.

Still, we had to try.

We eased Clyde into the back seat of a '41 Chevy belonging to my cousin, Joe David. I got in the back, too, with Clyde's head in my lap, and asked God to please give my brother a miracle. But there was to be no miracle that hot summer night.

We drove like mad all the way to Jackson, yet I have never been in a car that seemed to move so slowly. I cannot remember another ninety minutes that might as well have been ninety hours or even ninety days. The road to Jackson seemed to go on forever. . . and Clyde seemed to die a little more each mile. By the time we reached Jackson, he was barely hanging on to life.

If you have ever sat in an emergency room waiting room, praying with all your being that the doctor will walk through that door and give you some good news, then you have some idea of what the next few hours were like. Some people put Clyde on a stretcher and carried him into the hospital. I remember being in a room with him—I suppose it was Intensive Care, but I am not really sure. A lot of other people were in there, and I sat observing it all, but I was too numb to absorb anything. It was happening all around me, but I was not really a part of it.

Until the doctor came through that door. His news was not good.

My brother was dead.

My brother, who had put his life on the line God knows how many times fighting to keep this country free. My brother, who had wanted to prove to me that a black kid growing up on the wrong side of town in New Hebron, Mississippi, could amount to something. He was dead, for no good reason at all.

Clyde did not die right away. A group picked him up and carried him across the street to the doctor's office. Naturally they had to take him in the back entrance.

I took Clyde's death hard. You do not just get over something like that. Back then, there was not even an investigation to determine whether the deputy marshal had used excessive force. There was no need for an investigation because Clyde was black, the man who shot him was white, and in the eyes of the power structure, that settled it.

I still take Clyde's death hard, even though it happened nearly fifty years ago. Sometimes I think about who he could have been and what he could have contributed to society. This world will never know how much it missed, simply because a white man with a badge was not going to let some "uppity nigger" sass or challenge him.

"You're not worth as much"

There is not a single doubt in my mind that Clyde was shot and killed for no reason other than that he was black. There is no way in the world that any deputy would have used his weapon on a young white man who was making too much noise while waiting in line to see a movie.

Black lives just did not count for much in Mississippi in those days. I had seen the truth of that statement many times by my sixteenth birthday, but it was the murder of my brother Clyde that made it a personal reality to me.

The second tragedy that helped open my eyes to the reality of racism was much smaller, but it still had a profound effect on the way I looked at life. Its lesson was the same: "You're not worth as much as a white person."

I do not want you to get the wrong idea and think I accepted that line of reasoning—that I thought I *was* inferior because I was black. Not even for an instant did I think that way. I knew I was just as good as anybody else, no matter what anybody thought. At the same time I knew that most of the whites in New Hebron were looking down their noses at me—and I suppose I figured it would have been that way anywhere else in the world, too.

Anyway, I was twelve when I hired myself out to a white man who was in a hurry to get several tons of hay into his barns. It looked like rainy weather was headed our way, and he knew that if he did not get all that hay inside, it might be ruined.

It never occurred to me to set my price beforehand. I simply told the

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HELL

The Bible Versus the Traditional View

Babu G. Ranganathan
West Hartford, Conn.

AS A FORMER Hindu converted to Christianity, having known the Lord for over twenty years, and being a committed Reformed Baptist, I would like to speak in defense of the conditionalist view of hell. I had believed in the traditional view of hell for most of my Christian life so I am very familiar with the various views about hell that evangelical Christians hold.

The conditionalist view is that the wicked will suffer a period of agony and anguish in proportion to their individual guilt and then be forever destroyed, or cease to exist. This view is supported abundantly both by the Christian Scriptures and the first century Christian fathers as well as by some prominent groups of the Protestant Reformation such as the Anabaptists, and it is also supported by some evangelical scholars and theologians of today such as John R.W. Stott and Clark H. Pinnock.

Immortality: A gift from God

What most people believe about hell is influenced very much by what they believe about the nature of the human soul. The ancient pagans (i.e. Greeks, Hindus, Egyptians, Babylonians, etc.) believed that the soul is inherently immortal and must live on forever even after the body dies and dissolves into the dust. This was because they believed that the human soul was intrinsically divine, having the nature of deity, and so it could not die. This philosophy of the inherent immortality of the human soul was a cardinal teaching of the ancient Greeks and strongly influenced early Christian thought on the nature of the human soul. Although early Christians rejected the pagan belief that the soul was divine or deity, some compromised with Greek philosophy in accepting the idea that the soul was inherently immortal. The first century Christian fathers, however, such as Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Shepherd of Hermas, Polycarp (a pupil of the apostle John), Justin Martyr, Tatian and Irenaeus held to the belief that only those who

Editor's Note

THIS ARTICLE is the first of a new bimonthly *Advent Christian Witness* feature that will look at Advent Christian perspectives on a variety of doctrinal and theological themes. Some of the articles will provide fresh looks at distinctive Advent Christian doctrines while others will look at contemporary doctrinal and theological issues from an Advent Christian viewpoint. In our April issue, Dr. David A. Dean will discuss how Advent Christians understand what the Bible teaches about heaven. Other articles this year will look at the Christian practice of worship on the first day of the week, the importance of the return of Jesus Christ for contemporary Advent Christian preaching and teaching, and an Advent Christian perspective on what the Bible teaches regarding "signs and wonders." We hope you'll find these articles both thoughtful and helpful. If you have a particular doctrinal or theological question you would like to see addressed, send your suggestions to me and we'll consider them as we plan future issues. ❑

believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will inherit immortality and eternal life.

In short they believed that, while Christians now have absolute assurance of eternal life, the actual possession of eternal life will not be until Resurrection Day. That is why the apostle Paul says in Romans 2:7 that believers (Christians) "by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life." Thus, Paul equates immortality with eternal life. Eternal life or immortality is to be a gift from God to his people through Jesus Christ; it is not something that is inherent to man. Even Adam and Eve did not possess inherent immortality upon their creation. That is why there was planted a Tree of Life in the midst of the Garden of Eden. Finally, Scripture says in 1 Timothy 6:16 that Jesus Christ "*only* hath immortality. . ." That is, Jesus Christ is the only human being who now possesses inherent immortality.

Now if a human being is not inherently immortal then it is possible for him or her to be destroyed or cease to exist. This means that it is not necessary that the wicked have to suffer eternal conscious torment in hell forever. The Bible, in fact, over and over again says that the ungodly will be destroyed in respect to body and soul (the whole person). It is true that sometimes the word "destruction" is to be taken figuratively. But it is the *subject* of the destruction that determines whether we are to interpret the meaning as figurative or literal. For example, if one is told that a person had destroyed his life by gambling, the subject of the destruction is the quality of that person's life not his biological life. But when Jesus says that God can destroy the body and soul in gehenna (Matthew 10:28), the subject of the destruction is a man's whole being and, thus, the destruction cannot be interpreted as merely his quality of life. The whole being (body and soul) of the wicked will be destroyed or cease to exist. That is the simple teaching of Scripture. If one were to destroy, for example, a house there is no more house. There may be remnants of what was once the house, but as for the house itself it no longer exists as a house. Nor does God prescribe fire anywhere in Scripture as judicial punishment except for the purpose of *total* destruction.

A visible example

How then does one interpret biblical phrases such as "unquenchable fire" and other such terms used in the Bible in referring to the destruction of the wicked. Here we must interpret Scripture with Scripture. In Isaiah 34, for example, God says that Edom will be destroyed with unquenchable fire and that the smoke of Edom's destruction will ascend up forever and ever. Edom is not still burning today. Such figures of speech are used in the Bible to mean that the *result* of the destruction is irrevocable and eternal, that Edom will not exist again. It is not the process of destruction that is eternal. Similarly in Jude 7 we read that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by eternal fire. But these cities are no longer still burning. The word "eternal" can be used in regard to redemption also. The Bible says in Hebrews 9:12 that Christ obtained for his elect eternal redemption. Again, it is not the process of redemption which is eternal, but rather its result. Unquenchable fire also means that the fire will not be extinguished *until* it has done its work of complete destruction.

The example, however, that indisputably settles the issue is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Jude 7 says that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah "are set forth for an *example*, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." The word "example" in the verse comes from the original Greek New Testament word *deigma*, and wherever any form of this Greek word is used in the New Testament it

Does Conditionalism encourage sin?

WHAT ABOUT the danger that eternal extinction removes the fear of hell and thus encourages sin? Conditionalists point to the remarkable results of the traditionalist view. Augustine responded to the traditional doctrine by inventing purgatory, Origen by formulating restorationism. Skeptics turn the idea into a joke or use it as an excuse to charge God with injustice. Even those who say they believe the doctrine [of conscious eternal punishment] usually think eternal torment is for someone else and thus contrive to protect themselves from the shock value the belief supposedly has.

Most certainly our age desperately needs to learn the fear of the Almighty, and that is one reason for the proper preaching of hell. . .We have all violated God's voice in nature and conscience. Those who reject his final word of mercy in Jesus Christ are warned in the most awesome terms. Nothing remains for such a one, Scripture says, but fearful anticipation of judgment—and fiery indignation which will devour every adversary! One of the greatest benefits to come by recovering the scriptural teaching on hell will be to loose preachers' tongues to make very clear this alternative to salvation in the power of the Holy Spirit and in the wholesome and truthful language of the Word of God.

Excerpted from *The Fire that Consumes* by Edward William Fudge (Paternoster Press, 1994).

means an example that is visible to the eye. Now in what way were Sodom and Gomorrah an example of destruction by *eternal fire*? They were an example in the fact that these cities suffered total destruction (annihilation) and they also suffered irrevocable destruction because they would never exist as cities again. One may argue that the souls of Sodom and Gomorrah are burning forever in hell now, but if that were the case then Scripture cannot use the destruction of these cities as a visible example of judgment by eternal fire, since that is not something we can observe. When one gives an example of something to another it must be by its very nature visible or observable. Besides, the belief that the souls of the wicked will burn forever in hell is based on the *unbiblical* assumption that the human soul is inherently immortal or indestructible.

Even the word "forever" has different meanings in the Bible. In Scripture, the word "forever" does not always mean endless or eternal duration. For example, in Exodus 21:6 we read that servants were to serve their masters *forever*. Certainly this cannot mean for eternity. In other places of Scripture the word "forever," in the original language, is also rendered as "old" (Lamentations 3:6) or "long." In such cases the word "forever" is used to mean the entire length or duration of the *nature* of a thing.

God's wrath and God's purpose

Regarding now the justice of God we must acknowledge that God is absolutely sovereign. God can satisfy his eternal holiness and justice the way he pleases. God's wrath is not an end in itself but a means to an end, that end being the glorification of his eternal justice. We must not impose our philosophy of what God ought to be upon the Holy Scriptures. Ultimately, however, as Curtis Dickinson has stated, God's wrath cannot contradict his purpose. According to Ephesians 1:9-11 God's ultimate purpose is a universe which is in total harmony with his moral character and nature, and when this happens God will be "all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28). But how can this be if those in gehenna (or lake of fire) continue for eternity in conscious rebellion against God? We must keep in mind that although God is just he is not cruel. If eternal conscious torment of the wicked is not necessary to satisfy God's eternal justice then to inflict such conscious torment for eternity upon all the unsaved whether young or old would be a great form of cruelty and torture. Such cruelty and torture are characteristics of the *pagan* gods towards their enemies. The lovely and beautiful character of the true God must not be marred by unbiblical and corrupt notions of hell.

Finally, we must base our view of hell and the afterlife strictly on what the *Bible* says, not on tradition or human philosophies and opinions. Not many realize the fact that in the New Testament there are different Greek words for hell. But unfortunately the English Bible translates these different words for hell as one word, and this has been a cause of much confusion to those who wish to study the subject. The New Testament Greek words for hell are *hades* and *gehenna* and they both have different meanings. Hades means the unseen world or the place of the dead. It has nothing to do with punishment or reward. It is equivalent to the Hebrew word "sheol" in the Old Testament and in its meaning. Gehenna, on the other hand, is the abode of punishment for the wicked.

The story of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16 has often been used by many, especially preachers, as a depiction of the punishment that the wicked will suffer in hell. But this is not the case. First of all when Jesus refers to the Rich Man being in torment in the flame of hell the Greek word for hell in the passage is *not* gehenna (the place of punishment) but rather it is the Greek word *hades*. The story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, like the other series of parables before it, was used of the Lord to illustrate or

Tradition Must Yield to Scripture

BUT WILL the final destiny of the impenitent be eternal conscious torment, 'forever and ever,' or will it be a total annihilation of their being? The former has to be described as traditional orthodoxy, for most of the church fathers, the medieval theologians and the Reformers held it. And probably most evangelical leaders hold it today. Do I hold it, however? Well, emotionally, I find the concept intolerable and do not understand how people can live with it without either cauterizing their feelings or cracking under the strain.

But our emotions are a fluctuating, unreliable guide to truth and must not be exalted to a place of supreme authority in determining it. As a committed Evangelical, my question must be—and is—not what does my heart tell me, but what does God's Word say? And in order to answer this question, we need to survey the biblical material afresh and to open our minds (not just our hearts) to the possibility that Scripture points in the direction of annihilation, and that 'eternal conscious torment' is a tradition which has to yield to the supreme authority of Scripture.

John R.W. Stott quoted in *Evangelical Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue* by David Edwards with a response from John Stott (InterVarsity Press, 1988).

depict the end of the rule of the Pharisees and to depict the end of the Jewish era and dispensation (as represented by the Rich Man being in torment) and it was also used by the Lord to depict or illustrate the elevation of Gentile Christianity (as represented by Lazarus). Actually, Lazarus represented the poor Jews of Jesus' time who were ignored by the religious leaders of Israel and also the gentiles who, even though rejected by the Jewish leaders, would nevertheless be accepted into the bosom of Abraham through their new found faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. The religious leaders of Israel had lived only for themselves and ignored the spiritual needs of the spiritually sick and starving people around them. Another reason why this parable cannot be interpreted literally is because the Greek word for "flame" in the passage is *phlox* which means brightness and is used in other passages in pertaining to Christ's piercing eyes. If Jesus had meant a literal fire he would have used the equivalent of the Greek word *puros* which he did not.

The concept that hades was a place divided into two compartments, one of suffering for the wicked and the other of bliss for the righteous, was a Jewish belief that had developed during the intertestamental period, the period of time in between when the Old and New Testaments were written. Thus, this particular view of hades was not canonical, that is it was not something that God himself had revealed to the Jews through Scripture. There is no evidence in Scripture that hades is a place where the wicked suffer while awaiting final judgment or punishment in gehenna (the Lake of fire). Such a concept of hades developed as a result of pagan influence on Jewish thinking about the nature of the soul.

In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Jesus was simply borrowing this popular Jewish folklore of hades to use as an illustration to make a point to the Pharisees and religious leaders of his day, but he was not necessarily endorsing the folklore as being doctrinally valid or correct.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that eternal life in Scripture means more than just eternal existence, but it must, at least, include eternal existence. Eternal life comes as a package which includes endless glory, honor, joy, and bliss. The eternal punishment of the wicked will be just the opposite—the *loss*, the eternal, irrevocable, loss of eternal existence along with its glory, honor, bliss, and joy. Because Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins God can be just in forgiving our sins and granting us immortality and eternal life when we genuinely repent and put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Bible says that Jesus Christ "hath abolished death, and hath brought *life* and *immortality* to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). ❑

Reconciliation

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Christ was deeply felt. That sense of family was and is unforgettable.

Closer to home, Robert symbolized that relationship across racial lines. As this young African-American and his white bride exchanged the vows of marriage and confirmed their vows with the giving of rings, there was a reverence under God's Spirit that permeated the sanctuary. After the service a young woman with tears in her eyes shared, "That was the most worshipful experience I have had in a long time." The following day an older Christian, whom I respect greatly, and who felt some fear and uncertainty about this marriage, said to me, "There is no question, God was really present in what happened in that marriage yesterday. I saw him at work."

An absence of racial disdain or hatred is good, but it is not enough. The experience of racial interaction and building racial reconciliation personally is great but not enough. Even the boldness to take a stand for the right interracial policy in the church is not enough.

We must, as a local church, become pro-active in building those bridges that bring a reverence into our inter-racial relationships. We must, as Christians, seek those relationships where God's Spirit is clearly present. The oneness as seen in the cross-cultural prayer meeting needs to become the rule in our churches. The spiritual worship found in that wedding must become the nature of our relationships within the family of God.

The book of Acts, including the birth of the church in Acts 2, is a story of cross-cultural relationships and reconciliation. It is a story of prayer meetings of multiple races joined by the Spirit of God. It did not always come easily, but the Spirit of God has moved Christians beyond their safe havens of homogeneous communities to inter-racial experiences that have built and strengthened the church.

The psalmist puts it beautifully when he says, *"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!"* (Psalm 133:1). There is a joy that comes to us when godly reconciliation replaces cultural separation in our lives. Enjoying someone as a brother or sister in Christ is an experience that gets us beyond the isolation of a narrowly drawn world. We must, as a church, become pro-active in building our inter-racial relationships. ❑

A native of Wilmington, N.C., Adrian Shepard is senior pastor of United Advent Christian Church in Wilmington. Adrian is an Aurora University graduate and former Executive Vice-president of the Advent Christian General Conference.

Your Church and the Great Commission

Harold Patterson
Director of World Missions

WHICH OF THE following statements are true? My church has a place in God's plan. My church is a key church in the growth of our denomination. My church has an important part to play in world missions for the Advent Christian church. If you answered yes to all three, you're right! The gathering together of believers in a local community to form a fellowship is called in the Bible the "church" in that particular area. Scripture teaches that the local church is the principal organization in the growth and expansion of God's kingdom. After all, the church at Pentecost was initially a local church. So was the church at Antioch. And the churches of the New Testament were local congregations established by first-century missionaries.

Your church is vital

Your local church is ordained by God for its particular ministry in your community. I think of an Advent Christian congregation in New England that in the early 1950s considered closing because they had no pastor and were declining in size. In a meeting to close the church, one member stood up and said, "No, God has ordained this church in this town. We can't give up!" As a result they carried on and today this congregation is the dominant church in its community and one of the larger Advent Christian churches in New England.

The local church has a vital role in God's plan. Jim Reapsome, in an editorial for *Pulse* magazine, told a story of a huge snowstorm in 1937 that hit Salem, Oregon. It caved in the roof of the tiny Christian and Missionary Alliance congregation in that town. "Without funds for repairs and no hope for growth, the elders decided to close up shop. They told the 25 or so people to find other churches. You can't do that, protested one of the women. You can't close down this church, she insisted. 'Why not?' they demanded. Because our missionaries won't have a church to come home to. Her logic compelled the brothers to change their minds. They found money to fix the roof and today that church has over 2,000 people worshiping on Sunday mornings and supports 32 missionaries." Brother Reapsome goes on to say, "by refusing to allow her church to die because missionaries needed it, the woman embodied the spirit of A.B. Simpson, father of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. He knew that churches exist to send people anywhere and everywhere to declare the Gospel. He didn't invent that idea, of course. It originated with Jesus Christ and was exemplified by the church at Antioch in Syria."

Your church is a key player in the growth of the Advent Christian church.

Your church is a key player in the growth of the Advent Christian church. Really! The Advent Christian church came into being as a fellowship of believers. We understand the Bible to teach the centrality of the local church. In fact, as our denominational leaders revisited this concept, they decided

that our offices in Charlotte should be called the "denominational offices," because the real "headquarters" of the denomination is the local church. That's where the decisions are made and acted upon that build the church. If a denomination is to fulfill the Great Commission, it is wholly dependent upon the growth of its local churches and the establishing of new local churches. If every church in our denomination were to set a firm goal to increase its membership by 10% each year, in ten years we would be twice the size we are now. For most of our churches this would simply mean the addition of five or six persons every year. That's not an impossible task. We need to apply a paraphrase of an advertising slogan of a noted investment firm: "We win people the Jesus way. . . One follower at a time." Would your church make a commitment to reach out to add to its membership at 10% this coming year and mean it?

If a denomination is to fulfill the Great Commission, it is wholly dependent upon the growth of its local churches and the establishing of new local churches.

The gospel is spread through local churches

It should not be surprising then that the local church is most important in the expansion of the gospel. Bertha Cassidy said, "Any church willed by the Spirit of God will be a missionary church." The local church is important in that it teaches the Bible and the need "to teach every man and present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." That's discipleship! John Jenkins, missionary to Panama with New Tribes Mission wrote, "The local church is designed by God to be a workshop to equip the believers by 'the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry,' and that has *always* had to do with reconciling of a lost world to a loving, gracious God."

Surveys of missionaries and Christian workers indicate that people sense the initial call for missionary service primarily between the ages of ten and thirteen. Obviously Sunday school and youth groups have an impact in the response of people to a missionary call. Dr. Bob Pierce said, "What better gift could your church present to the world than an army of well-trained, dedicated youthful missionaries who know the meaning of sacrifice, the power of prayer, and the discipline of a close work with the Lord? Tomorrow's missionary is today's Sunday school pupil." Other surveys indicate that (although the trend is beginning to change a little bit with the advent of mega-churches) 80% of all missionaries come from small or rural congregations which characterizes many of the churches in our denomination.

Are we doing a good job in sharing the importance of the Great Commission? Tragically, in many churches the answer is no! Many view missions as an elective in the program like the men's softball team or an aerobics class. Or missions becomes something that can be added to the church program to make it attractive rather than being the central motivating mission of the church. Gene Moffat observed that many churches are minimally involved in missions in spite of the fact that missions is their greatest responsibility. Everything the local church does should be oriented towards missions. A recent survey indicated that only one out of ten pastors in America felt the church was doing an adequate job with missions, but not many of them were willing to change their program to make a difference. In many of our churches missions remains an option, not an order. Some years ago after I had conducted a missions workshop, a pastor stopped me and said, "I have been in the ministry for 30 years and never preached a sermon on missions. I'm going home to do that now." He did, and the impact of missions on his ministry in the churches he has served since then has been dramatic.

The rewards to the local church of being involved in an aggressive mission-centered ministry are many and exciting.

The local church and world missions

What is the responsibility of the local church to missions? Certainly its prayer ministry needs to be directed outward from the church. I'm thrilled when I get reports from our sister churches in New Zealand that have distinctive prayer meetings for missions. The Scripture tells us that "prayer should be made for all men."

It is in the local church that the challenge to missionary work is brought out, that the Holy Spirit may use it to call people into ministry. Only a few years ago I was asked to attend a family reunion in eastern North Carolina. While there I met a gentleman from Oregon. When he found out what I did, he said, "Oh, my church is very interested in missions. We support fourteen missionaries." I didn't have the heart to tell him that at the time, that was more missionaries than our whole denomination supported! I responded, 'My, you must belong to a large church." He said, "Well, our average Sunday morning attendance is 85-90! We support our missionaries through a mission society we started as a church." I left that discussion with the thought, "are we missing something somewhere?"

Do you know that, according to a recent survey by the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association, the leading denominations in sending missionaries average about one missionary per 200 people? The Advent Christian denomination averages one missionary for about every 2,000 members. Clearly, there is much more that

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New Zealand Notebook

God has put his fingerprint on New Zealand. The same God who blew in that tempest, loves us with such a relentless love.

Noelle Carle
Auckland, N.Z.

THE LIGHTS of Auckland piercing the endless darkness were a bea con to us, not warning, but promising that land was near. After twelve long hours on the plane from Los Angeles, we had arrived in the peach-hued dawn of a New Zealand Saturday. The culmination of over a year's worth of prayer and planning found us red-eyed, numb with exhaustion, and in an almost dream-like state.

In this walking coma we found the world basically the same, yet oddly different. The variety and diversity of trees contrasted sharply with our familiar New England maples, pines, and oaks. The hues of green spreading over the pastureland and hills were so striking that we had to remind ourselves that this was winter (the seasons are reversed in the Southern hemisphere). We found milk, bread, and cheese—but the flavors, even the aromas were dissimilar. The language was blessedly familiar, yet charmingly accented. God has family all over the world and he has placed us in the midst of brothers and sisters. Here are people who would move into an apartment with their daughter and son-in-law, literally into one room, so we could spread out in their four bedroom house. Here are people who would give us their car to use, even knowing our irritating habit of driving on the right-hand side of the road.

Here are people who lend their best dining room furniture, their pots and pans, blankets and sheets right off their beds and the beds themselves so we could move into our home before our container arrived. Here are folk who come by and see that the grass is long; so knowing that we have no mower, they take their afternoon off to mow our lawn. Here are lovely friends who give of their time, their food, their resources, and their hearts to make sure we are comfortable, settling in and feeling at home. Words can't tell how much it means to us to be treated so lovingly even though we're strangers.

The work is plentiful

As soon as we adjusted to New Zealand time, we felt ready to begin the work, which was and is plentiful. Any congregation which has experienced steady decline feels demoralized and somewhat hopeless. Such a church desires to be healthy and thriving, yet the changes which must take place to bring that about are painful and threatening. So it is here. Caution and patience are the watchwords. The body of dedicated brothers and sisters is eager to discover with us how best to begin reaching out into the community of the lost.

Russell has begun Discipleship Bible Studies with the purpose of teaching the practical and foundational elements of a relationship with God. We've worked on visiting each member to become acquainted with them and learn the gifts with which God has endowed this church. A young women's Bible study has been started and plans for a regular women's fellowship are under discussion. Ongoing adult Christian education is needed, yet Sunday school has traditionally been viewed as a children's program exclusively. Pending approval, the ABLE Institute will begin in February. This program of adult electives will include classes on Understanding the Bible, Church Life, Life/Family Skills, Christian Service and Discipleship. We're planning courses to equip people to walk with God, who in turn can empower people for service.

The title, ABLE, stands for Adult

Bible in Life Electives and we will take for our theme Romans 12:1-2: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." Sunday school for children will run concurrently. There are no ministries for children, preadolescents, or teens. We would like to begin a group which will help meet the needs of young children and their families and will also bring them into fellowship with the church. To this end, we're working on forming a youth choir. But that task is difficult. Russell teaches Bible at two local primary schools. One of the classes is of children aged seven and eight. They were thrilled with the idea of the choir, yet few actually showed up. One little girl regretfully told Russell that her mother won't let her come because it's religious. She added that she would keep pestering her mom. PTL.

New Zealand is populated with several groups of Polynesian people—Samoan, Fijian, Tongan, and Niuean. A group of Niueans approached the church in Takanini, asking for help in establishing a place of worship. They meet at 12:30 on Sunday afternoon, yet several of them come for our service at 10:00 a.m. and stay through the day. They had a Sunday school which met at that time and was led by one person. Attendance was erratic; not always the same children. So with some organization, the Sunday school was moved to the 12:30 service and Russell, along with three other teachers, have four separate classes. This has provided stability to the Niuean Sunday school, which is thriving. In any ministry, the pressures of doing for God can easily outweigh the need to be with God.

God's mighty hand

What do we do when these pressures are compounded by the occasional burden of homesickness and longing for the dear and familiar? The psalmist looked to the hills for his help. And we look to the hills, the seas, the mountains, for in these things we see the mighty hand of God. One particular Saturday, we headed for the Tasman Sea. As soon as we left Papakura, south of us, the houses thinned out, giving way to pasture and bush. The land rose gradually to reveal a patchwork of velvety greens, stretching as far as we could see. The sky was layered with gray-blue clouds which occasionally admitted a spot of sun filtered through the mist.

The hills rose ever higher until we were passing through deep gorges. Surprisingly, these steep hills were terraced pastureland grazed by very sure-footed cattle and sheep. Around every corner we expected to see the sea, but nothing prepared us for the sight when it was finally revealed. The road plunged down the gorge, winding and turning, ending finally right on the beach. The sea in the fifty-mile-an-hour wind was tempestuous. Break-

continued on page 19

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E

S E E K

K N O W

March

1 Praise God for the baptisms that **Russell Carle** has had the opportunity to perform in New Zealand.

2 Pray for the **Carle family** as they communicate Christ's love with people they come in contact with.

3 Praise God that Liberian Advent Christian leader Rev. **Ben Cleon** is safe after being held captive for nearly two years by one of the three factions in that country's civil war.

4 Pray for Pastor **Amos Gbaa** as he works to establish an Advent Christian congregation near the capital city in the West African nation of Ghana.

5 Praise God that congregations associated with the Advent Christian Church in **Nigeria** continue to show numerical and spiritual growth.

6 Pray that God will give Christians in the West African nations of **Ghana**, **Nigeria**, and **Liberia** strength and courage to deal with the problems of war, poverty, and government corruption in that region.

7 Praise God for the continuing ministry opportunities that **Steven and Ann Lay** have to communicate the gospel in word and deed in Osaka.

8 Pray for **Karen Rigney** as she continues her Japanese language studies and teaches English as a second language to Japanese students.

9 Praise God for the ongoing ministry of Advent Christian congregations and leaders in **Japan**.

10 Pray that, as Advent Christian missionaries, pastors, and congregations communicate the good news of Christ's love, the **Holy Spirit** will soften the hearts of those who hear.

11 Praise God for several new **national church planters** serving with Advent Christian missions in **Mexico**.

12 Pray for **Joel and Omegu Garcia** as they work to establish an Advent Christian congregation in La Purisima on the Baja California peninsula of Mexico.

13 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Mexican Medical Mission** continues to do both in terms of

medical ministry and in partnership with local churches.

14 Pray that God will provide spiritually and materially for students at **Tecate Bible Institute** in Tecate, Mexico.

15 Praise God that several Advent Christian congregations are once again planning **short-term mission trips** during 1996.

16 Pray that God will lead several Advent Christian people to consider **career mission service** in India and Honduras.

17 Praise God for the work of a number of Advent Christian volunteers in planning and preparing for the upcoming **General Conference triennial sessions** this June in Tampa, Florida.

18 Pray that the Holy Spirit will begin to prepare the hearts of all those who participate in General Conference as we seek the Lord's **leading and direction**.

19 Praise God for the opportunities that Asia-Pacific Area Director **George Teshera** continues to have to work with Advent Christian missionaries and national leaders.

20 Pray that God will give wisdom, guidance, and discernment to Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** as he oversees the work of Advent Christian World Missions.

21 Praise God for the strong commitment to Christian missions of **Marion Damon** and **Barbara White**.

22 Pray for **Marion and Barbara** as they are now back in India and actively overseeing the work of Advent Christian missions in that country. And pray that God will raise up Advent Christian missionaries for that field.

23 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** continue to have with young people and families in the inner-city of Memphis, Tennessee.

24 Pray that God will use **Francis and Lyne** to build a strong, healthy inner-city Advent Christian congregation in Memphis.

25 Praise God for expanding opportunities for **ethnic and urban ministries** for Advent Christian missions.

26 Pray that God will give **strength**, **wisdom**, and **protection** to Advent Christian pastors and leaders serving in urban and ethnic ministries.

27 Praise God for the opportunities that **Canadian** Advent Christian pastors are having to meet for fellowship and ministry planning.

28 Pray that God will use the seven Advent Christian congregations located in the Canadian provinces of **Quebec**, **New Brunswick**, and **Nova Scotia** to touch lives in their community with the good news of Christ's love.

29 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Warren Prestidge** and **David Vignali** are having as they serve with Advent Christian missions in the Philippines.

30 Pray that God will provide spiritually and materially for students at **Oro Bible College** in the Philippines.

31 Praise God for his grace expressed through **Jesus Christ**.

Commission continued from page 15

we need to do in our churches to recruit missionaries.

The local church has a responsibility to those called by God to go out into full-time ministry—whether that ministry is pastoral, missions oriented, or some other related work. We're responsible to stand with those people, to pray for them and go with them.

The rewards to the local church of being involved in an aggressive mission-centered ministry are many and exciting. The most obvious evidence of reward is the numerical growth of the church. People want to be part of a church that has a heartbeat for the world. I can say out of personal experience in pastoring mission-minded churches, that many good, substantial Bible-believing families have joined our congregations because they want to be part of a church that had a strong missions program.

Coupled with growth are financial resources to expand the ministry at home. In the last few years, leading lay people from two of our top three Penny Crusade churches shared with me their numerical growth, their increase in the physical properties, and the increase in the finances of the church. "We cannot go back to the way we did things," they said. The exciting rewards of being a missions-minded church are seeing people develop their spiritual gifts and the expansion of ministry both at home and abroad. Prayer meetings, too, take on a different tone as earnest prayer is given for those who have gone out into their various callings in ministries.

A strong missionary spirit and zeal is one obvious sign of a healthy church. Charles King, *Advent Christian Missions* editor writing in 1924, says of the church, "When your church becomes personally involved with one of its own members on the field, you begin to realize that missions is the most exciting work and the most rewarding work in the world." Ask yourself these questions: "If my local church were to seriously face its personal responsibility to evangelize the world, what changes would take place in our ministry? What kind of growth would we expect? What would be the attitude of our people?"

Can you imagine the impact and growth upon the Advent Christian Church and ultimately upon the spreading of the Gospel throughout the world if your church was turned on to missions? Wouldn't you like to find out? ❑

Harold Patterson is director of world missions for the Advent Christian General Conference.

Young, American, and Black

continued from page 9

man I would help him, figuring that if I put in a good day's work, he would have to pay me at least a dollar and a half, maybe even two dollars. This was the going rate and I knew it.

Let me tell you, I never worked so hard in my life. By the end of the day I had begun to think that even two dollars was not going to be enough! Then again, I wanted to do the very best job I could so the man would hire me again sometime. After all, a boy of twelve can always use some extra spending money.

Well, at the end of that day, that man seemed to appreciate all my hard work. He told me so. Then he went to get the money he owed me.

"This is for you!" he said with a tone that made it sound as if he were dropping the crown jewels into my hand.

When I looked into my palm, what I saw was a far cry from diamonds and rubies. It was fifteen cents! Fifteen lousy cents for a full day's work.

I was too shocked to say anything. So I just stood there staring at that dime and buffalo nickel, wishing I had not worked quite so hard. As the shock began to wear off, a flash of anger shot through me. I wanted to take that money and throw it back in his face. But I was afraid to show the least little bit of displeasure. After all, I was black, he was white, and I knew even at twelve that it was not very smart to make waves. Neither was it very smart to appear to be unappreciative.

"What's the matter, boy? Cat got your tongue?"

"Uh... no, sir. Thank you, sir."

I put the fifteen cents in my pocket and walked out of that man's house and I never went back.

But as I walked away, I felt anger surging through me once again. This time it was not so much that the man had cheated me. I was angry because he thought I should be happy with fifteen cents. He thought I was so dumb that I would think fifteen cents was a fair price for a hard day's work.

And why would he think a thing like that? Pure and simple, because I was black.

I could tell you at least a dozen other incidents that happened to me when I was a young man. I won't because I have already made my point. But I will say this: Not a black person in this country has not been touched by racism in some way. My experiences as a child have been repeated time and again in the lives of millions of children everywhere in the United States.

One more thing about the state where I grew up. I have no facts to back me up on this, but I would not be surprised to find out that Mississippi has more Christian churches per capita than any other state. Let me take that a step further. It would not surprise me to find out that Mississippi is the "church capital" of the world. Mississippi is right in the heart of what they call the Bible Belt, and by and large Mississippians are Bible-believing, churchgoing people.

But you know what? Not once when I was a child did I ever hear a leader from one of Mississippi's white churches speak out against racism. Never did I hear *any* white Christian say, "Brothers, what we've been doing is wrong! We've got to realize that *all* people are created in the image of God—blacks, too—and we've got to start treating them as our equals."

Sunday morning is still the most segregated day of the week. We have to change that, before it is too late.

As a matter of fact, just the reverse was true. The white churches of Mississippi were for the most part defenders of the status quo, preaching segregation from the pulpit as God's perfect plan for the races.

Those days may be gone. But the fruit they produced remains. And Sunday morning is still the most segregated day of the week.

Brothers and sisters, we have to change that. And we must do it now, before it is too late. ❑

John Perkins has a passion to see American Christians take the lead in bringing about racial reconciliation in the United States. Rev. Perkins was the founder of Voice of Calvary Ministries in Mendenhall, Miss. and he and his wife are currently involved in urban ministry in the Los Angeles area. This article is excerpted from *He's My Brother: A Black Activist and a Former Klansman Tell Their Stories.* Copyright © 1994 by John Perkins and Thomas Tarrants and published by Fleming H. Revell.

New Zealand

from 15

ers, from as far out as we could see, churned against the black sand with a fury which was frightening and exhilarating. Further up the beach, which was towered over by the cliffs down which we'd driven, we found a small waterfall. But the wind was so strong it simply blew the water back up into the air. We came back from this excursion refreshed, as if we'd been scoured clean and granted a new perspective.

God has put his fingerprint on New Zealand. The same God who blew in that tempest, loves us with such a relentless love. To see these beauties is to commune with him. We need ongoing prayer for the people of New Zealand. With only two percent of the population in church on any given Sunday, the fields are ready for harvest. Only God, through his Spirit, can sweep across this landing, drawing all men to himself. ❑

Noelle Carle and her husband Russell serve as Advent Christian missionaries in New Zealand. Before beginning their missionary service there last June, they served the Attleboro, Mass., Advent Christian Church.

Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
891 Queen St. #60
Southington, CT 06489

Marion Damon (March 27)
891 Queen St. #60
Southington, CT 06489

Beryl Joy Hollis (December 16)
39B Belmont Terrace
Milford
North Shore City
NEW ZEALAND

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Warren Prestidge
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Margaret Helms (September 18)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-794-62-8744

Karen Rigney (June 5)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-794-62-8744

New Zealand

Russell and Noelle Carle
(December 30 and December 19)
(Ryan, November 15, 1979)
(Emily, June 23, 1983)
(Peter, August 14, 1991)
11 Rosehill Dr.
Papakura
Auckland 1702
NEW ZEALAND

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
Bududuram Refugee Camp
National Mobilization Program
Box 46
Accra, GHANA

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

Liberia and China
Our pastor in China
(September 30 and October 26)
All correspondence should be channelled through the missions office.

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devasahayam
Beulah Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Rev. T. and Victoria Devairakkam
33, Jalan Intan 4/1
Taman Intan,
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Mexico

Carlos Quintero
387 W. Poppyfields Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
(818) 791-2447

Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Carlos Quintero

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Vice-president
Harold Patterson; World Missions
Millie Griswold; Resource Development

P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

Russell Giasson; Services
Robert Mayer; Publications
Brent Carpenter; Church Relations

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Advent Christian
WITNESS

March 1996

a b o r t i o n

CULTURE OF DEATH

e u t h a n a s i a

Life not worth living is therefore worth destroying.

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"The majority of our worries are about things over which we have no control," writes Marcy Alves. Marcy suggests some things we can do to move from worry to trust in God.

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A team of volunteers from the Village Church in Dowling Park, Fla., is serving Christ by ministering to inmates in a nearby correctional facility. Eula McGee provides an account of their work.

The Mission Field Among Us 9

One way that world missions is coming home to America is through growing numbers of international students studying on college and university campuses throughout Canada and the United States. Penny Vann writes about how the Lord has led her and her husband, Jeff, to help minister to international students at the University of South Carolina.

Culture of Death 10

"Academicians may argue whether these times are modern or post-modern, industrial or post-industrial, but one increasingly feels they are post-civilized," writes Paul Greenberg. What is at stake in the current debates over abortion and euthanasia?

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Throughout American society we see signs of a growing culture of death. Paul Greenberg addresses what is at stake, in terms of our future.

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Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy, Timothy Setzer, Linda Leavitt**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks** Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR



A Way of Life

EARLIER this month, as I was preparing a series of Bible studies, something that Paul said in the first chapter of Philippians caught my attention in a way I hadn't thought about recently. Paul's letter to the church at Philippi is one of my favorite sections of Holy Scripture and I've been privileged to teach it on three different occasions during the past twenty years. But as I looked again at Philippians 1:9-11, Paul's words spoke to me about an issue that we who live on the edge of the twenty-first century are forced to address each day of our lives.

I like how Eugene Peterson paraphrases the passage: "So this is my prayer: that your love will flourish and that you will not only love much but well. Learn to love appropriately. You need to use your head and test your feelings so that your love is sincere and intelligent, not sentimental gush." Paul prays that the Philippians will express their love for Christ in the concrete decisions and choices they make in their daily lives.

What would happen in our lives and in our churches if we could begin to see our Christian faith as a way of life?

Our culture is characterized by two important trends. The technological revolution has led to an explosion of information and knowledge. Alvin Toffler uses the term "future shock" to describe what happens in a society where knowledge explodes at a rate faster than most of us can handle. But our explosion of technology and knowledge has also caused many to look at the future with despair and hopelessness and reduce love to a momentary rush of passion and feeling. Love for many in modern day America is about my feelings and my needs.

Paul reminds us that love is much more than that. To love appropriately involves wisdom. And wisdom is the ability to bring God's perspective to bear on our decisions, our choices, and our relationships. Emotions and feelings are important but without wisdom, they can easily deceive us. Information and knowledge can be helpful but without wisdom, they simply lead to hopelessness and despair. Christian love reflects itself in how we choose to live our lives and how we treat others, both in our church and in the world we live in every day. It's "sincere and intelligent, not sentimental gush."

Later on in his letter, Paul challenges the Philippians to work out their salvation, in other words to let the inner transformation that God is doing in their lives through his grace work in their daily living. And he's not just writing that to individuals but to the Philippian church as a congregation. What the apostle wants his readers (and us) to see is that the Christian faith is a way of life, something we dare not stick into a box marked "Sunday morning" or "in case of emergency, open." It's a way of life that affects us not only individually, but corporately.

More and more I'm discovering that following Jesus is a process. It's a process of allowing his grace to work its way out in my decisions and choices. It's a process of practicing love for others. It's a process of learning what it means to see the world through the priorities that God has. And it's a process of allowing God to teach me the lessons I need to learn. A lot of times it's not easy. But I wouldn't want it any other way because I've discovered that nothing in all of life can compare to God's wisdom.

What would happen in our lives and in our churches if we could begin to see our Christian faith as a way of life? Would would happen if we sought God's wisdom both individually and corporately? I'm convinced that we would see less conflict in our congregations. And I'm convinced that individually, our relationships with our family, friends, and associates would improve dramatically. Are you ready to take up Paul's challenge? Is your church? The Christian faith is more than ritual, more even than correct doctrine. It's a way of life that focuses on God's grace expressed through Jesus Christ. ❑



Jim Whitmer photography

What, Me Worry?

Or Why Pray, When You Can Worry?

Marcy Alves
Concord, N.H.

AS *Mad Magazine's* freckle-faced, elephant-eared, toothy-smiles Alfred E. Newman used to say: "What, me worry?" This sentiment should be the watchword for Christians today. But all too often our lives reflect the sentiment, "Why pray, when you can worry?" For many Christians, worry is a bothersome but normal part of living. After all, who doesn't worry about bills, health, kids, or taxes now and then?

I heard about a woman who worried from sun-up to sun-down. She worried about the weather, how to pay for college (for her one and three year olds), what to have for Christmas dinner (this began just after Labor Day), and who her husband would marry if she died before he did. One day she popped in at her neighbor's house for a cup of coffee and the normal worry lines were nowhere to be seen. Her mystified friend asked her wasn't she concerned that it might (or might not) rain that day. The woman replied that she had no longer any need to worry. Her friend asked what brought about this state of grace, and the perpetual worrier explained that her dear husband had hired someone to worry for her. The hired man worried about the house, the grocery bill, the Christmas dinner, college for the kids, and so on.

"If he does all that worrying, you must have to pay him a lot," her neighbor ventured.

"Yes, about forty-thousand dollars a year," the converted worrier answered.

"Well!" exclaimed her friend. "How in the world are you going to pay for that?!"

Smiling sweetly, the former worrier sipped her coffee, took a second Danish and said, "That's *his* worry."

Most of us can't afford to hire someone for us. So we do it ourselves.

How does worry affect us?

The majority of our worries are about things over which we have no control. One man charted his worries and discovered that 40% of them were about things that never happened; 30% were about past decisions that he couldn't unmake; 12% dealt with other people's criticisms of him; and 10% were worries about his health. He concluded that only 8% were really legitimate. How many of your worries are "legitimate?" If you were asked to chart what you worried about one year, or six months, or even a month ago today, could you even remember what it was?

The word "worry" is derived from an old Anglo-Saxon word meaning "to strangle or to choke." It reminds us of what Jesus said in Mark 4:18-19 about some who hear the word, "*the worries of this life*, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and *choke the word*, making it unfruitful." Worry makes God's Word unfruitful in your life; it literally strangles the Word. As Vance Havner once said, "Worry is like a rocking chair, it'll give you something to do,

but it won't get you anywhere."

Besides using up lots of time and energy in an unproductive way, worry produces several adverse effects. First, worry affects you physically. Worry is a physical stress which, among other things, breaks down resistance to disease, interferes with restful sleep, diseases the nervous system, promotes hair loss in men and in women, and raises cholesterol levels in the blood. The Bible tells us in Psalm 31:9-10 some things that stress does to the body: "Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak."

For many Christians, worry is a bothersome but normal part of living.

Second, worry affects you emotionally. In Proverbs, we read, "An anxious heart weighs a man down" (Prov. 12:25). Worry makes your spirit feel heavy. Third, worry affects you spiritually. It is sin. Paul challenges the Philippians with the words, "Do not be anxious about anything" (Phil. 4:6). These words are a command. The Scripture does not say, "If you can, don't be anxious," or "Don't be anxious, unless you can't help it." One woman excused her sin by saying, "It must help to worry, because the things I worry about never happen."

Can God be trusted?

Many of the things we worry about involve money, jobs, bills, children's education, caring for elderly parents, and so on. Money problems are common to us all. Everyone has money problems—rich and poor. You either don't have enough, or you don't know what to do with what you have.

The Scriptures teach us that worry and faith are mutually exclusive. When you are worrying, you are not trusting God. When you are trusting God, you are not worrying. Jesus puts it so well. I know you've read this passage before, but take a few moments to ponder the Words of the Master: "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. *You cannot serve both God and money.*

Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly father feeds them. *Are you not much more valuable than they?* Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So *do not worry*, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, [the Jews to whom Christ was talking understood pagans to be those who followed false gods] and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore *do not worry* about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:25-34).

We forget we have a heavenly Father who loves us and is able to care for us.

Worrying about financial things is like serving another god. What we are subtly saying with our worry is, "God can't be trusted with the details of my life. Things happen in my life that are out of God's control—my circumstances are bigger than he is."

Like many people today, my husband and I often have more bills than money at the end of the month. One winter day we received a particularly large electric bill. (We were living in a house that used electric heat.) I knew that I should have left the bill for my husband to open, but I wanted to see how much our energy-conserving methods had saved us that month. When I opened the bill it was much larger than expected and I began to panic. "God, where are you?" I cried. "How are we going to pay this bill?" And I began to spiral into a depression within minutes. It was then the Lord asked me, "Marcy, how did you feel five minutes ago?" "I felt fine," I answered him with an accusing edge in my voice. Then he said to me, "Go back to five minutes ago. I haven't changed since then." What happened? I got my eyes on my inability and off of God's ability. That's where worry starts. We forget we have a heavenly Father who loves us and is able to care for us.

Said the robin to the sparrow, "I would really like to know,

Why these anxious human beings rush about and worry so."

Said the sparrow to the robin, "I think that it must be,

They have no heavenly Father such as cares for you and me." (*unknown*)

Moving from worry to trust

How do we keep God's peace in our lives in those times when our human nature tells us we need to worry? Here are some practical sug-

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We Know There is Hope

Volunteers: The Heart of Prison Ministries

Eula W. McGee
Dowling Park, Fla.

"LORD, YOU want *me* to volunteer? Be a disciple? You know I'm just one of those "little people," not important at all. I do believe in being obedient, Lord. What was that? Disciple prisoners? Behind bars! Oh! No! I couldn't go to those wicked, evil people? They're getting what they deserve. They had their chance and made the wrong choices. And besides, Lord, I'm a woman." All of those things ran through my mind. But then I read the words of Jesus: I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me... when did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?... I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine you did for me" (Matthew 25:37-39 NIV).

The weak things of this world

Is it fear? Those forbidding walls and razor-wire fences, and the clanging of those metal doors locking behind you? Your perception of life behind them? Is it your mind set against those who have made wrong choices in life resulting in incarceration?

If, as we say, we desire the mind of Christ, we must view ministering inside prison walls from his perspective, not our own. Christ's command is to go into all the world, even to the dregs of society hidden behind those walls.

God uses the weak things of this world to confound the wise, yes, even the little old grandmas on the team. We quickly recognized how important grandmas and grandpas are to these lonely, more often than not forsaken and forgotten men and women who have lost their identity to become just a number.

A team of volunteers from Bixler Memorial Church (A.C.) in Dowling Park, Fla., gives their time every Tuesday evening to go to prison—and serve inmates in the name of Christ.

Little ministries with big potentials

If Jesus were walking on earth today in a physical body, would he spend the greater portion of his time in the church? Probably not. He would more likely relate to outreach ministries—little people following the leading of the Holy Spirit into little ministries, resulting in reaching multitudes with the gospel message.

Even among church attenders, two opinions emerge: 1) the lock-them-up-and-throw-away-the-keys syndrome, and 2) that of empathy, commitment to prayer or to participation in ministry. If we are of the second opinion, we are aware that *all* lives are affected by good and bad choices. But for Christ's mercy and grace, one of those men or women behind bars could be you or me.

A church with a vision is a church on the move

Bixler Memorial Church (A.C.) at Dowling Park, Florida, is just such a fellowship. How often we quote Proverbs 20:18: Where there is no vision, the people perish. But how seldom we act upon that admonition from God's Word.

In the fall of 1992, Prison Fellowship, the ministry started almost twenty years ago by Charles Colson, held a training seminar for leaders and facilitators at the Advent Christian Village. Stan Jarrett, the field di-

rector for PF in north Florida, was the leader.

Bixler pastor Ronald Thomas and local team leader, Harold Stringer hosted the seminar. My husband Dave, and I, having retired recently at the Advent Christian Village, had been involved in a prison ministry for a number of years in Georgia, so this new outreach was of immediate interest to us. Out of the training seminar came about fifteen men and women committed to serving in the prison ministry. They now work together as a team of facilitators to assist Harold with in-prison seminars in three state correctional institutions and their work camps.

Participating in the seminar were the chaplain and the head security officer from one of the local prisons, two Christian men who were interested in making this activity available to their inmates.

Upon learning from Stan that they had no follow-up study course material, I took the opportunity to discuss with the chaplain the possibility of continuing ministry to those attending seminars through Bible correspondence studies from the Source of Light Ministries International. We had served with this mission for several years prior to retirement and knew how effectively the courses were being used to win men and women to Christ and to disciple them from God's Word. The printed page has a unique advantage. It can go into places where we are forbidden—into prisons and far-away homes as well as into the heart.

Little people caring much

Those who give of themselves to share with inmates are not hesitant to express the joys and blessing they receive. By the third and last night of an in-prison seminar, sharing with the same table group of inmates throughout, weary though we may be, we don't want it to end.

"Jesus set the example that we should do for others as he has done for us."—*Harold*

"I keep coming back knowing there will be a percentage of these inmates who will hear the Word and it will change their lives."—*Dave*

"Often those at my table are so young—my grandsons' ages. I pray that I may encourage young men to turn to Christ and follow him."—*Wally*

So much gratitude from those who have so little

Although offenses, backgrounds, and sentences are not discussed, we find clear evidence that these are basically people of deprivation, in some areas of life, that has affected their minds, attitudes, ability to trust and care, and to make sound choices and

1996

AWAKENING THE GIANT

WRITING AWARDS

$5,000 FIRST PRIZE

SECOND PRIZE, $3,000 PLUS TWO PRIZES OF $1,000 EACH

THE UNITED STATES: A DISCIPLED NATION IN THIS GENERATION

The United States is an evangelized nation. God has given the church in America a great proclamation victory! Gallup studies reveal that 94% of Americans believe in God. Barna studies show 85% believe in the Divinity of Jesus Christ. How is it possible that we have all these believers—a great majority of the American people—yet our nation continues an accelerating decline into moral degeneracy? Jesus provides the answer in His Great Commission mandate, Matthew 28:18-20: "...make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

Our heavenly Father has given us a magnificent proclamation victory. We have responded with a monumental discipling failure!

The Christian Church in America is like a **sleeping giant**—great in size and potential, yet unaware of the great adventure and power of living in obedience to Christ's teachings. It is time to awaken this giant and teach obedience to the millions in our nation who call themselves by the name of Christ.

The Mission for Christians Today: Making Disciples

The ***Awakening the Giant*** awards program recognizes creative, skillful writing that presents in a sensitive, thought-provoking manner the importance of **making America a discipled nation in this generation.** To be eligible, submitted articles must be published in an Evangelical Press Association member publication.

A total of $10,000 in cash awards will be given each year to authors who write to mobilize and equip Christians to disciple our nation in this generation.

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see them through.

Expressed gratitude comes quickly. Seminar after seminar brings the response, "We can't understand why you would give your time to us in here when you could be home with your families. Because you care, we know there is hope."

Ministry with a purpose

Seminar attendance ratio is about ten percent of the population of an institution. Some come because they truly hunger for the study of God's Word; some to fellowship with people from the outside; some because they hear there will be cookies or cake; and a few with their own secret intents. Even many of these break down under the testimony of a strong Christian witness, finding Christ as their answer.

"If I had not been caught and sent to prison, I would now be dead out there on the street."

"God allowed my incarceration to bring me to a saving knowledge of him."

"I've lived on the street since I can remember. I never had a job so how could I go about looking for one? What could I do? (A man in his thirties.)

"I couldn't stop stealing cars. I kept asking, 'Why don't they catch me and put me where I can't do this.' Now I know Jesus has taken this from my life. I can go back on the outside now." (an 18-year-old)

Aristotle wrote, "Virtue consists not merely in *knowing* what is right but in having the will to *do* what is right." One goal of prison ministries is to lead inmates into a life of right choices while in prison and to help them begin planning the same for their lives on the outside.

Among the many excellent seminar topics, "Going for the Gold," a life-plan seminar on goal setting, is one of the most important and long-range effective studies produced by Prison Fellowship Ministries for use in in-prison seminars.

Another area of need is in interpersonal relationships. This is a weak area for many inmates before prison and interpersonal tension tends to increase in prison because of close living conditions. A number of seminars touch on this topic but "Building Bridges, Breaking Down Walls," seems to bring more interpersonal response and healing among inmates than any other. It gets down to the nuts and bolts of some deep-seated issues, and gives answers from the Scriptures that they can live by.

Chuck Colson summed up volunteerism, referring to it as did the English political writer Edmund Burke: "the little platoons." Colson said, "Volunteerism is critical in ways we don't often think about: It goes to the heart of the American tradition of civic virtue and responsibility. . . Christians need to grasp the broader cultural impact of our ministries. The effects of volunteerism reach beyond specific acts of justice or kindness, important though these are. . . when Prison Fellowship volunteers. . . give up their Tuesday nights to lead a prison Bible study or visit a prisoner,

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Worry

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gestions that work.

First, *learn to function from a base of trust in God.* Isaiah reminds us that when our attention and trust are focused on God, he will keep us in perfect peace (see Isaiah 26:3).

Second, *turn negative, peace disrupting thoughts over to God.* "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

Once my husband David and I were house-sitting for some friends who owned a bed-and-breakfast, horse ranch. Our first day there I looked out the window and saw the horses on the front lawn instead of in the corral where they belonged. We went outside and tried unsuccessfully to chase them into the fenced-in area. Then my husband got a bright idea. He went into the barn and returned with a bucket of feed and a rope. One by one he approached the horses with the bucket. As they lowered their heads to eat the grain, David slipped the rope around their necks and led each one back to the corral. This is a good picture to keep in mind when thinking of what it means to "take captive *every thought to* make it obedient to Christ." Picture each thought as a run-away horse being led by a rope to Jesus.

Third, *learn to turn to God in prayer on a regular basis.* "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7).

Finally, *practice the presence of God.* Alexander MacClaren once said, "Peace comes not from the absence of trouble, but from the presence of God."

An elderly Christian was asked by some young Christians what his secret of tranquility was. They asked him, "Don't the temptations [to worry] that bother us come knocking at the door of your heart anymore?" He answered, "The temptations that trouble you do come knocking, but I answer, 'The place is already occupied.'"

We need to learn to trust in God and remain in constant communication with him so that when worry comes knocking we can answer, "The place is already occupied." ❑

Marcy Devers Alves is a graduate of Philadelphia College of the Bible and is a popular speaker at conferences, women's retreats, Women's Aglow, and Christian Women's Clubs on the East Coast and in New England. She and her husband, David, are serving at New Life Fellowship, an Advent Christian congregation in Concord, N.H.

The MISSION FIELD Among Us

Penny Vann
Columbia, S.C.

IT'S WEDNESDAY at lunchtime, and Jeff and I turn onto Pendelton Street. On one side are turn-of-the-century two-story homes. On the other is the University of South Carolina School of Business. One house stands out from all the rest for it has small flags from every nation on earth flying all around its porch. It is the Hospitality House for International Students or "H.I.S. Intl." Jeff and I pull into the driveway and park. As we walk up to the porch we see that the two picnic tables are full with students. Some speak in English, others in Chinese, or Korean, or Russian, or French. We say, "hi," go in to get our name tags and lunch, and try to find a place to sit.

Why do we come here every Wednesday? We come to join forces with other Christian volunteers to minister to these students. We help them practice their conversational English skills and get adjusted to life in America. We try to build friendships, which we hope will lead to sharing the gospel with them. In essence we have come to help fulfill the Great Commission—Jesus' command to his followers to make disciples.

Seventy-eight percent of the internationals at the University of South Carolina are from the 10/40 window and China—those areas of the world where 93% of all unreached people groups live.

Who are these students? They are some of the 450,000 international students who come to the United States to study. Seventy-eight percent of the internationals at the University of South Carolina are from the 10/40 window and China—those areas of the world where 93% of all unreached people groups live. (It is also the area where traditional missions are restricted or barred from entrance.) They are studying for their B.A., M.A., or PhD degrees. They are the future heads of state, business leaders, diplomats, and teachers of their countries. In the words of Frank Tillipaugh, "Many of these international students who come to America do not have a clear idea of who Christ is and his salvation." They may never meet a real Christian, nor enter a Christian church. H.I.S. International is trying to change that by offering friendship to these students. Besides the lunches they also sponsor formal English classes, as well as trips to the mountains and other destinations. These activities are low-key with the primary purpose of getting to know the students, letting them get to know us, and looking for ways we can provide for their needs. International also offers three levels of Bible studies: one for those interested in learning about Christianity but not ready to make a commitment, one for seekers, and one for those who are seriously thinking about Christianity. These studies are offered in English, Chinese, and Korean. Again, attendance is left up to the student. Students can also ask for studies to be done in their language and the staff will find someone to do it.

Here's an example of how all this worked out in our experience. On our first day there, Jeff met two students from Korea who needed help finding used bicycles so they could get to and from school. Jeff helped them, eventually driving them to the places to look at and purchase the bikes. That evening they asked Jeff if he could get them Korean-English Bibles. Jeff called John, one of the directors, who gave one to each of them. They are now involved in the Korean Bible study. It does not always work this fast. However if H.I.S can make five significant contacts with a student in a week, an impression will be made, and if it keeps up, a life will be changed.

Has God given you a burden for students, especially international students? How can you get involved in this type of ministry? First, you begin to pray for God to open doors for you

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CULTURE OF DEATH

Paul Greenberg
Little Rock, Ark.

WHEN THE lady from the Arkansas chapter of Right-to-Life called and asked if I would accept its annual award for promoting the cause, I hesitated. Did she know she was talking not to a saint but a sinner? As an editorial writer back in 1973, I had thought—and written—that *Roe v. Wade* sounded like a pretty sensible decision.

It seemed simple enough back then. Thanks to *Roe v. Wade*, those relatively few Americans needing an abortion for good reason would no longer have to thread their way through a tangle of state laws, or fly to Sweden or somewhere. At last the decision would be safely left to the physician and patient, and that would be that. No one else need be concerned.

Here was an essentially private matter—abortion—that was on the periphery of medical and legal concerns, let alone social and political ones. Back then abortion wasn't a litmus-test issue. Nor did it seem an ongoing constitutional concern like federal-state relations, or the balance of powers between the executive and legislative branches. It dealt with just one limited, technical medical specialty. I confidently expected my first editorial on *Roe v. Wade* for the *Pine Bluff Commercial* to be my last on the subject.

In short, Right-to-Life was now proposing to give its award to somebody who couldn't tell a slippery slope from a ukulele.

NO NATION CAN APPROVE VIOLENCE AGAINST THE MOST INNOCENT AND VULNERABLE, AND EXPECT THE EFFECTS OF THAT APPROVAL TO BE LIMITED.

Ideas have consequences

I think I would have smiled indulgently back then if you had told me that the debate over abortion would grow far more intense 20 years down the road, that abortion would become the kind of moral test for American society that slavery once was, and that in *Roe v. Wade* we were seeing the *Dred Scott* decision of the 20th century.

What I didn't realize was that ideas have consequences, especially when they become embedded in law. The law, as they say, is a great teacher. What they don't say is that it can teach not only good but evil, not only peace but turmoil, not only life but death.

For some time after *Roe v. Wade*, I carried on a running debate with a local Baptist preacher over whether the state constitution should protect

life. The preacher, Mike Huckabee, would later become that rarity, a Republican lieutenant governor of Arkansas. (He's now feeling out a race for the U.S. Senate.) On more than one occasion since, he has asked me what changed my mind about abortion. "A million and a half abortions a year" is the simplest answer. But there is more to it.

I hadn't realized the dimensions of the social and political changes *Roe v. Wade* would come to symbolize—and license. And how that change would devalue not only life but the tenor of society in general. No nation can approve violence against the most innocent and vulnerable, and expect the effects of that approval to be limited.

By 1995, what had seemed a purely private decision in rare circumstances would become a standard method of birth control, an industry, a political litmus test, a rite of passage... a central tenet of a whole culture that centers not around life, its promise and responsibilities, but around self, its creation and cultivation.

Those unalienable rights to life and liberty Mr. Jefferson mentioned in the Declaration seem to have been eclipsed by a sad emphasis on the pursuit of happiness. And for all the happiness that the unbridled right to an abortion is supposed to make possible, no political question since slavery seems so heavy with guilt, and its denial. Or else there would be no reason for those who favor abortion to call it something else, "choice" being the most popular euphemism and "reproductive freedom" the most ironic.

"Lifestyle"—not life

The signs of this culture of death are now so common that they no longer stand out. In politics and economics, pop culture and art, lifestyle long ago replaced life. The general coarseness of today's politics, today's economics, today's society did not spring up overnight; it is a consequence of a general disrespect for persons. When life ceases to be a right and becomes a power relationship, when any victims can be dismissed as unpersons, indignation and accusation will replace reason and respect in public discourse.

It's happened before. The brutalities of the Third Reich in the 1930s did not arrive without warning; they were a logical extension of the enlightened eugenics of the 1920s, and its concept of *liebensunwerten Lebens*, or life not worth living. And therefore worth destroying. In the growing acceptance of abortion and euthanasia, one can see the advancing pincers of the same brutalizing idea.

It was in 1988 that Walker Percy, in a letter to the *New York Times*, pointed out whither we are tending. It was such a good letter, the *Times* declined to print it. It was also a remarkably restrained analysis of the abortion issue, and remains one of the most concise summaries of just what is being aborted: "Rather than enter the fray with one or another argument, which, whether true or not, seems to be unavailing," wrote Percy, "I should like to call attention to certain social and historical consequences which may be less well-known, [for] once the line is crossed, once that principle gains acceptance—juridically, medically, socially—[that] innocent human life can be destroyed for whatever reason, for the most admirable socio-economic, medical, or social reasons—then it does not take a prophet to predict what will happen next." The rise of Kevorkianism is only the next wave of the general disdain for life that seems to be setting in. Others will follow as surely as one transgression leads to another.

IN THE GROWING ACCEPTANCE OF ABORTION AND EUTHANASIA, ONE CAN SEE THE ADVANCING PINCERS OF A BRUTALIZING IDEA.

Academicians may argue whether these times are modern or post-modern, industrial or post-industrial, but one increasingly feels they are post-civilized. One recalls the response Gandhi is said to have made when, visiting London, he was asked what he thought of Western civilization. "I would be all for it," he replied.

Earlier in this century, Jose Ortega y Gasset wrote about the dehumanization of art. Now we witness the dehumanization of the culture in general. It is hard to imagine a poet at the tag end of the 20th century celebrating man in the words of a 16th century English playwright: "What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form, in moving, how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals."

If man may still be seen as a paragon, he is no longer seen as an animal, a creature with a time to live and a time to die. Instead, man becomes self-creating, and therefore self-destroying, with an obligation only to self. A life becomes something to be designed, and to be destroyed at will—not sanctified, revered, celebrated, mourned.

It used to be said, in the kind of jest that is half serious, that Americans look upon death as a preventable disease. Now it can be said in all seriousness that we come to look on birth the same way. ❑

Paul Greenberg is editorial page editor of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette in Little Rock and a syndicated columnist. He won the Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing in 1969. From *The Weekly Standard*, October 9, 1995. Copyright © 1995 by *The Weekly Standard* and used by permission.

Practicing Hospitality

Linda Fritchey
Iberia, Missouri

IF YOU KNEW that you had only a short time left to be with your loved ones, the last words you would probably speak would be the things closest to your heart. One of the last things Jesus said before he ascended into heaven was, "All power in heaven and earth is given to me. So go therefore and make followers of all people in the world. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything that I have told you. You can be sure that I will be with you always. I will continue with you until the end of the world" (Matthew 28:18-20). The King James version uses the word, "commanded," rather than, "I have told you." Therefore, making followers of Christ is not optional. It is mandatory. It is our mission in life, if we love Christ and are obedient to his command.

A powerful instrument for disciplemaking is through Christian hospitality. It is biblically based and effective. It means learning to open our hearts and homes to others. As a steward of our resources, we need to realize that our homes belong to God.

More than entertaining

Hospitality is much more than entertaining in our homes. Sometimes it means staying up late, listening to the hurts and struggles of others. Sometimes it means crying with them. It may mean taking care of children and cooking meals. Sometimes it means leaving the comfort and security of our homes to reach out to others in Christian love and concern. It may mean going to them, encouraging them, providing meals, visiting in hospitals or in prisons. It definitely requires a personal investment of our time, labor, and emotional energy. However, we are told in Galatians 6:2 to "Bear one another's burdens." 3 John 5 further states, "Beloved, it is a loyal thing you do when you render any service to the brethren, especially to strangers. . ."

Jesus' ministry was built on hospitality. He said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). Hospitality means developing a servant's heart. In John 13, we see Jesus serving his disciples. He took the basin and towel, got down on his knees and washed their feet. Wherever he went, Jesus made people feel important and welcome. He greeted children with open arms. He visited with the woman at the well. He fed multitudes. He had one last meal with his disciples, before he went to be with his heavenly Father.

Mary and Martha had their disagreements, but together they made a good team. Martha saw to the details of preparing the home and food for their guest Jesus. Mary gave herself. She sat with Jesus, talked with him, and listened to him. She formed a relationship with Jesus. In Luke 10:39-41, we find Mary sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to him teach. Martha became angry because she had so much work to do. She went in and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me alone to do all the work? Tell her to help me!" Jesus answered, "Martha, Martha, you are getting worried and upset about too many things. Only one thing is important, and Mary has chosen the right thing, and it will never be taken away from her."

Later, six days before the Passover, Jesus again visited their home. This account is found in John 12:1-8. The Bible tells us, "There they had a dinner for Jesus. Martha served the food. . . Mary brought a pint of very expensive perfume. . . She poured the perfume on Jesus' feet, and then she wiped his feet with her hair. And the sweet perfume filled the whole house." Mary and Martha knew how to make their guest feel loved and treasured.

Paul developed a strong relationship with people in the church at Thessalonica. He wrote them a letter stating, "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us" (1 Thessalonians 2:8). Our responsibility goes beyond getting people to church and teaching them about Christ. Our responsibility involves loving and building relationships. Matthew 10 tells us that the homes that opened up to the disciples would be blessed, and the towns and houses which did not would be cursed.

As a steward of our resources, we need to realize that our homes belong to God.

People need love and support

In the book, *Creative Hospitality*, Bruce Rowlison tells the following story: "A little boy came in from his first day at Sunday school and his mother asked him how he liked it. The child replied, "I hated it. They put me in a room full of children all by myself." Rowlison goes on to say, "That is the same feeling of many adults when they attend worship service. . . The church is often a lonely crowd."

We live in troubled times. There is unrest in the world. The nuclear family is disintegrating. Crime and violence are rampant. If there were ever a need for Christians to practice hospitality, it is now. Crisis without loving care, support, and interest of the church is what motivates people to leave the church.

Most churches have someone who is responsible for greeting visitors and making them feel at home. Many church members welcome visitors with open arms and cordially invite them to come back again. Yet, there is a need for follow-up on visitors who come to Sunday school and worship. A few people from every congregation should be released from the duties of the church to reach out in quality ways to new people. Somebody needs to care between Sundays! Bonding needs to take place. Sometimes a bridge has to be built before evangelism can take place. Rowlison writes, "Somehow it seems we in the church have such a secure, happy fellowship that we can't comprehend the life of the majority of people being wounded or crushed by our impersonal society." Yet, these people are all around us. Some of them are our neighbors. They need our love and support.

The time to reach out to people is now. If you would like to learn more about Christian hospitality, perhaps you would enjoy reading Bruce Rowlison's book, *Creative Hospitality (As a Means of Evangelism)*. Rowlison shows the reader practical, simple, adaptable methods of effectively reaching out in love and concern to other believers, visitors, and to those in the community.

There are many other books, including *Open Heart, Open Home* by Karen Mains. I know many of you have already discovered the joys and rewards of serving Christ through Christian hospitality. I challenge you to take this very effective instrument for evangelism, and develop it to the fullest. We have God's promise that those who open their homes will be truly blessed. ❑

Linda Fritchey is an active member of Bray's Advent Christian Church in Iberia, Missouri. She is a member of the church board, and of the WHFMS Evening Circle. At the time of this writing, she served as Central Region WHFMS President. She graduated from Lincoln University, Jefferson City, Missouri, where she received masters degrees in the areas of special education, guidance, and counseling. Linda is currently employed with the Iberia R-V School District as a Guidance Counselor. She is a single parent, with five children and seven grandchildren.

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

April

1 Praise God for the opportunity that **Russell Carle** had to participate with several New Zealanders in a short-term missions team in the Philippines.

2 Pray for **Russell and Noelle** and their family as they continue to provide leadership for the Takanini Church of Christ, Life and Advent in near Auckland, New Zealand.

3 Praise God for the continued spiritual and numerical growth among Advent Christian congregations in **India**.

4 Pray for **Marion Damon** and **Barbara White** as they serve in an interim capacity and oversee Advent Christian mission work in India.

5 Pause for a few moments on this Good Friday to reflect on **the cross** of Jesus Christ.

6 Pray that God will raise up **new Advent Christian missionaries** for our India field.

7 Jesus Christ is **alive**. Join with his followers this Easter Sunday to celebrate this wonderful news.

8 Praise God for the growth and development of **Oro Bible College** under the leadership of **Warren Prestidge**.

9 Pray for **David Vignali** as he serves in a variety of areas in the Philippines.

10 Praise God for the many Advent Christian congregations participating in **Penny Crusade** 1996.

11 Pray that God will use **Joel and Omegu Garcia** to touch lives for Jesus Christ in La Purisima, Mexico.

12 Praise God for the opportunity that **John and Bonnie Gilbert** have to serve full-time with Mexican Medical Mission.

13 Praise God for new workers and new opportunities for Advent Christian missions in **Mexico**.

14 Pray that God will provide the material and spiritual needs of students at **Tecate Bible Institute** in Mexico.

15 Praise God that Advent Christian church-planting efforts in Ensenada have begun under the pastoral leadership of **Mario Cortez**.

16 Pray for Japan missionaries **Steven and Ann Lay** as they continue to make contacts with people in their surrounding community.

17 Praise God for the effective work that Advent Christian pastors and congregations in **Japan** continue to do in communicating the gospel.

18 Pray for Japan missionary **Karen Rigney** as she continues her language study and ministry.

19 Praise God for the several delegations of Advent Christian leaders attending **General Conference** this summer from Japan, the Philippines, and New Zealand.

20 Pray that as the General Conference triennial sessions draw near, that God will **prepare our hearts** to be sensitive to his leading and direction.

21 Praise God for the opportunity that World Mission Director **Harold Patterson** had earlier this year to visit the eastern European nation of **Croatia** and to explore the possibility of Advent Christian ministry in that country.

22 Pray for Asia/Pacific Area Director **George Teshera** as he continues to provide support and direction to Advent Christian national leaders and missionaries in Asia.

23 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Frances and Lyne Ssebikindu** continue to have in the inner-city of Memphis, Tennessee.

24 Pray that God will use **Frances and Lyne** to touch many lives with the good news of the gospel as they serve the Advent Christian congregation in Memphis.

25 Praise God for the continuing expansion of Advent Christian ministry in **urban and ethnic settings** in the United States.

26 Pray that God will give strength and courage to Advent Christians in **Liberia** as they continue to cope with the devastating effects of civil war in that country.

27 Praise God for the effective church-planting ministry that **Amos Gbaa** continues to have in the west African country of Ghana.

28 Pray for **your pastor** and his family, that God will give them strength, courage, and wisdom for their service.

29 Praise God for the power of the **Holy Spirit** that he has given his followers.

30 Pray that God will use **you** to build friendships with people in your sphere of influence who don't know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

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in a very real sense, they are helping to maintain and strengthen America's richest heritage... strengthening the "little platoons" that foster virtue and restrain the state. The "little platoons" that are the bedrock of America's freedom."

You can be one of those "little people" by answering the call in your church, or your community, to "do for the least of these brothers of mine," in a ministry to prisoners. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead through prayer, the Word, and good counsel. And remember, none of my excuses! ❑

Eula "Wally" McGee was born and raised in New Jersey and married Davis S. McGee Jr. while both were serving in the United States Navy during the 1940s. After raising two sons, the Lord called them to missionary service with the Source of Light Ministries in Madison, Ga. Eula served the mission in a variety of capacities. After sixteen years with the mission, retirement came at the Advent Christian Village where Eula has been active with creative writing, the in-house television program and other ministries. She continues her work with Source of Light and also works with the Village Church's volunteer Prison Ministry through Prison Fellowship.

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to reach out to this community. Next, ask around; call the college or university near you. Even smaller colleges often times have international students. Ask what groups are working with international students. Then ask what they need. It may be driving students to help them shop for food or a car, or helping with English, or having them over to your home for supper, even opening your home to let them live with you.

You also can start your own program. The most important thing here is to be consistent in your volunteering. The students come to look forward to seeing you.

So why do Jeff and I do it? Because God has allowed these students to come to America. So that they can hear the gospel, maybe for the first time, and respond-then go back to their countries to tell others. So many students have not heard the gospel. Pray that the Lord of the harvest would raise up workers for this field. Maybe even you! ❑

Penny Vann lives in Columbia, S.C. She and her husband Jeff are looking toward career missionary service. The Vanns are Berkshire Christian College graduates and have served Advent Christian congregations in Chattanooga, Tenn., and currently in Columbia, S.C.

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

Contradictions have always existed in the soul of man. But it is only when we prefer analysis to silence that they become a constant and insoluble problem. We are not meant to resolve all contradictions but to live with them and rise above them and see them in the light of exterior and objective values which make them trivial by comparison.

—Thomas Merton

The first great fact which emerges from our civilization is that today everything has become "means." There is no longer an "end"; we do not know whither we are going. We have forgotten our collective ends, and we possess great means; we set huge machines in motion in order to arrive nowhere.

—Jacques Ellul

In Other Words

Lloyd C. Douglas, author of *The Robe* and other novels, lived in a boarding house when he was a university student. A retired music teacher, infirm and unable to leave his apartment, lived on the first floor. Every morning they had a ritual: Douglas would come down the steps, open the old man's door and ask, "Well, what's the good news?" The other would pick up his tuning fork, tap it on the side of his wheelchair, and say, "That's middle C! It was middle C yesterday; it will be middle C tomorrow; it will be middle C a thousand years from now. The tenor upstairs sings flat, the piano across the hall is out of tune, but my friend, that is middle C!"

Jesus Christ is our tuning fork, ringing out middle C in a cacophonous world of competing truths: his pitch defines tonal reality and sets every other note in its proper place. Without him, truth—especially truth about God will be distorted. . . . To hear the music of heaven. . . we must listen to him.

—Donald McCullough

God wants us to adore Him, dance with Him, eat, drink, and sing with Him in the experience of His awesome, glorious love. The mystery of His desire is that an eternal, infinite, holy, and utterly self-fulfilling Being wants us—and He is willing to go to any lengths whatsover to disrupt, arouse, and stop us from pursuing any lover other than Himself. He is willing to go to the extreme of bearing our anger—and even more, pouring out His anger on His beloved Son, Being of His own Being. Through His unfathomable desire for us and His paradoxical methods of wooing us, He reveals His goodness.

—Dan Allender and Tremper Longman III

The rise of the Christian movement can be adequately explained in only one way, that Jesus' followers personally saw the risen Lord and considered his resurrection from the tomb conclusive evidence that he was truly the Messiah of Old Testament promise.

—Carl F.H. Henry

I find it ironic that people object to the proclamation of the Christian gospel these days because so many other faiths jostle on the doorstep of our global village. What's new? The variety of faiths in antiquity was even greater than it is today. And the early Christians, making as they did ultimate claims for Jesus, met the problem of other faiths head-on from the very outset. Their approach was interesting. They did not sit down and dialogue with other faiths very much, as far as we know. They did not denounce other faiths. They simply proclaimed Jesus with all the power and persuasiveness at their disposal.

—Michael Green

We are to be neither such emotional Christians that we never think, nor such intellectual Christians that we never feel. No, God has made us human beings, and human beings are by creation both rational and emotional.

—John R.W. Stott

Sources: Michael Green in *Acts for Today: First Century Christianity for Twentieth Century Christians* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1993, p. 38). Thomas Merton quoted from *Thoughts in Solitude*. Dan Allender and Tremper Longman III, in *Cry of the Soul* (Navpress, 1994. p. 236). Carl F.H. Henry from *God, Revelation, and Authority, Volume III*, p. 147. John R.W. Stott in *The Contemporary Christian* (InterVarsity Press, 1992, p. 125). Donald McCullough in *The Trivialization of God: The Dangerous Illusion of a Managable Deity* (Navpress, 1995, p.66-67).



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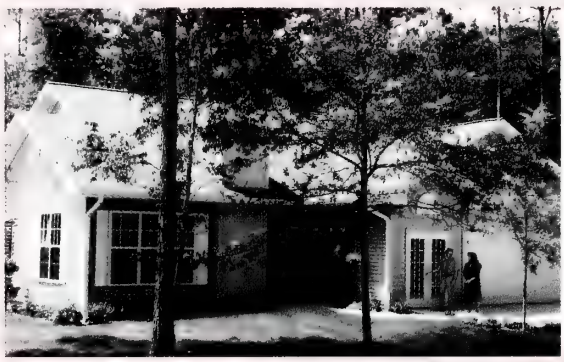
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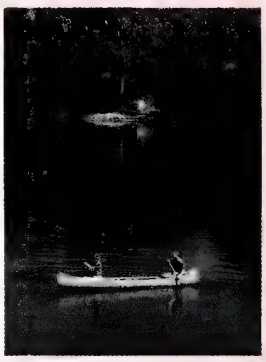
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Advent Christian WITNESS

April 1996



I believe in... Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was... crucified, dead, and buried... The third day He rose again from the dead.

from the Apostle's Creed

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We've all run into atheists—folks who don't believe in God. But sometimes we ourselves become "heart atheists" according to Clayton Blackstone, people who live as if God didn't exist.

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Spring is time for sprucing up the lawn and killing the weeds. Bill O'Connor suggests how we can remove the bitter roots that so often damage our relationships with God and others around us.

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Marion Damon suggests some ways we can discern God's calling in our lives and challenges us to consider the call of missions.

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"*Heaven* wasn't a popular word at my church when I was a boy," according to David A. Dean. Yet the word appears almost six-hundred times in our English Bible. What does the Bible teach about heaven?

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On the Cover

This month, we share a special photo with you taken by Harold S. Paxton III of St. Petersburg, Fla. Harold is a college student and the son of Pastor and Mrs. Harold Paxton from our St. Petersburg, Florida Advent Christian Church. His work is a fitting reminder of the Easter season.

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Advent Christian Witness

Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy, Timothy Setzer, Linda Leavitt**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks** Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria



COMPLETE UNITY?

JESUS' PRAYER for his followers in John 17 has always intrigued me. "I pray also for those who will believe in me through [the disciples] message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you....I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in Me. May they be brought to *complete unity* to let the world know that you sent me..."

Most American Christians try to read quickly through this passage with the hope that those words can be explained in a way that doesn't violate our rugged individualism. After all, the church is simply meant to be a voluntary society of individuals who freely choose to worship one hour a week in a given location, isn't it? Jesus can't be serious about this idea of "complete unity." And if he is, we reason, then he must mean unity with those who look like us and totally agree with us.

Divided disciples and a divided church are not an effective witness in a largely non-Christian culture.

Unity is crucial to Jesus

But Jesus is serious about unity. He's serious about it for two important reasons. First, because truth is ultimately found not in human reason or systems of thought but in a person. Jesus tells his followers, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Even the Bible itself is designed to testify that life is found only through Jesus Christ. (See John 5:39-40.) Those who confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are part of one body. It's a body that is both ethnically and theologically diverse. The body of Christ is not limited to Calvinists, not limited to Arminians, not limited to those who believe in Conditional Immortality, not limited to Pentecostals, Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, or Advent Christians. The church is comprised of all who confess the lordship of Jesus Christ and Jesus' prayer for unity is a prayer for all who confess him.

But Jesus reminds us that unity is also important in terms of fulfilling the Great Commission. Note again his words in John 17: "May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me." The Master puts it another way earlier in John's gospel, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Why has secularism become so powerful in America? One of the big reasons is that for the last 220 years, Christians in the United States have competed with each other and fragmented the church over minute issues of theology and interpretation. Jesus is right. Divided disciples and a divided church are not an effective witness in a largely non-Christian culture.

Please don't misunderstand. I think theology and doctrine are important and worth talking about. A clear line must be drawn between those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and those who do not. Those who do not confess Jesus Christ will face God's judgment and punishment. But the way to address matters of doctrine and theology among Christians is not through vindictive caricatures and heated rhetoric against those who disagree with us. That's the way of our secular culture as the recent round of Republican presidential primaries so well illustrates. God's way is found in the attitude that the Berean Christians demonstrated in Acts 17. They examined the Scriptures. When we disagree with fellow Christians, we together need to examine what the Scriptures teach and do so in a way that doesn't destroy the unity of our witness.

Christ-centered unity is important

Two months ago, I was privileged along with 35 other Advent Christian pastors to attend the Promise Keepers Clergy Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. And while there, something happened that rekindled my hope for the future of evangelical Christianity in America. Max Lucado, the well

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The Death of the Fool in Me

Clayton Blackstone
Lewiston, Idaho

I AM BY NATURE an atheist. I'm not the kind of atheist who banishes God from my life to soothe a guilty con science. And I'm not the kind of atheist who angrily kills him off for permitting rape and torture, the birth of deformed children, and the brutal regimes of Adolph Hitler and Joseph Stalin. I'm also not the kind of atheist who, in my struggle for intellectual integrity, equates rejecting my childish notion of an aging gentleman in a white beard with a disbelief in God.

But I am by nature an atheist. I am the kind of atheist who says in his heart, "There is no God." I never voice my disbelief. In fact, with my mouth I say more than what almost everyone else says about God. Yet my actions betray my confession and reveal my true orientation.

The "in my heart" confession exhilarates. The illusion of freedom sends me tripping into a spiritually induced psychedelic experience. The mirage of control massages my inflated ego. I love the sound of "lord of all reality" to my ears.

I attempt to explain away the starkness of my confession. I shutter at the depth of my mutiny. Surely the rebellion of others dwarfs mine. But if the absolute truth be known, we're all trying to get along without God or we're trying to use him for our own purposes. We are by nature atheists.

According to Eugene Peterson, my heart atheism decapitalizes "Him from God to god. I allow for his deity but restrict his jurisdiction to matters that don't impinge on my own sovereignty...It establishes the self at the center and arranges things, people, events, and God around it in such a way that no matter what happens the self is right...'the voice of I is the voice of God.'"

I am by nature an atheist.

I am by nature an atheist. My atheism shows itself each time I turn on the computer to view my "to do" list before connecting with the Master of the Universe through psalm-prayer. Atheism of the heart surfaces every time I allow my calendar to crowd out even thirty seconds to inquire about his better plan for my life. When I choose to pamper my whims rather than silence the untamed beast in me with obedience to my Sovereign, I deny the confession of my mouth.

"Gimme that boiled-down religion"

I am by nature an atheist challenged by Jesus to match my choices with my confession. I want to harmonize word and action. I long to live with integrity. I anxiously hope for people to witness the genuineness of my faith. His response to my craving? As straightforward as his response to an anonymous religious scholar who asked, "What is the most important of all the commandments."

Scribes and Pharisees reveled in lively debate. They loved to argue the fine points of the 613 statues in Jewish Law. Their discussions attempted to divide 365 negative and 248 positive injunctions into heavy and light, great and little. And then for fun, they whittled volumns of words into an all-encompassing few.

A Gentile once remarked to the famous Rabbi Hillel: "Make me a proselyte on the condition that you teach me the whole law while I stand on one foot."

"What you hate for yourself, do not do to your neighbor," the old teacher responded. "This is the whole law, the rest is commentary: go and learn."

The religious scholar asked for the summary because the wisdom of Jesus intrigued him. We ask when we realize we are stuck with our selfish selves and we are not very good company. The answer of Jesus offers a way to improve the nature of our companion.

"Listen Israel: The Lord your God is one; so love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy." Worshipers chanted "Listen, Israel: The Lord your God is One" in the local synagogue. Devout members of the Jewish community wore the con-

fession on their foreheads and wrists when at prayer. A small cylinder attached to the door of each room in a Jewish home contained the *she'ma*, reminding every person who entered and exited of Israel's all-encompassing God.

In this concise summary, each phrase explodes with implication. Like the pagans who surrounded the early Jewish community, our generation worships many gods. They worshipped the Baals and Asherah. We prostrate ourselves at the altars of job, education, social position, possessions, bank account, athletics, and self. Each of our deities possesses limited power to satisfy, forcing us to pay homage to many. But the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is one. His power extends to every area of life. All gods bow to him.

A single-minded focus

His oneness forces us to narrow the focus of our worship. Heart, mind, soul, strength. Passion, prayer, intelligence, energy. The words insist on single-mindedness. And it's here confession clashes with choice.

God is one. We believe it. We resent the insinuation that we worship at the feet of idols. We are one God kind of people. But Jesus urges us to be heart, mind, soul, and strength, passion, prayer, intelligence, and energy one God kind of people—people committed to destroying every vestige of heart atheism that remains. Heart, mind, soul, and strength followers of the one God strike a healthy balance between worship, Bible study, devotional disciplines, and cups of cold water in Jesus' name. Passion, prayer, intelligence, and energy disciples of the one God say "no" to some things in order to say "yes" to someone greater.

Once upon a time, seven fifteen-year-old high school students committed themselves to a common dream—a State Championship trophy for a school who had not enjoyed a winning basketball season in years. We practiced in the summer. We wore hats on frigid days when cool guys didn't even wear hats. We swallowed Vitamin C to avoid winter colds. Several of us even swore off girls during the season.

Three years later, we finished 16-2, third place in our division and a first game loss in the tournament. We failed to achieve our goal. But we rose higher than most teams in Washburn High School history because we became heart, mind, soul, strength basketball players.

We prostrate ourselves at the altars of job, education, social position, possessions, bank account, athletics, and self. Each of our deities possesses limited power to satisfy, forcing us to pay homage to many.

But the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is one.

Giving what we can't afford

Our sacrifice pales in comparison to a passion, prayer, intelligence, and energy lover of God Jesus noticed during offering time at the temple. He was sitting across from the collection box, watching. The religious scholars came wearing their "academic gowns, preening in the radiance of public flattery, and basking in "their" prominent positions." They placed their generous checks into the container with flare. Other rich folks made large contributions. Then a poor widow "came up and put in two small coins—a measly two cents."

Jesus called his disciples over and said, "The truth is that this poor widow gave more to the collection than all the others put together. All the others gave what they'll never miss; she gave extravagantly what she couldn't afford—she gave her all."

Heart, mind, soul, and strength love exhibits a healthy dependence on God and a willingness to give out of what it does not have. Sometimes we feel guilt because we want to do more, give more, pray more, know more. Yet God sees our gifts from a vantage point high above our own. His penetrating stare reveals something we fail to discern—we sometimes give our two cents worth and it is all we have. We give time we can't afford. We give money we can't afford. We give energy we can't afford. In our own eyes and others who watch, our efforts don't amount to much. But Jesus describes our giving as extravagant because our gift flows from heart, mind, soul, and strength love.

Heart atheism hoards the best for self, mistaking "the voice of God for the voice of I." Heart atheists confuse need with want, necessity with optional, important with urgent. When we yield to the atheist in us, we play the part of a fool (Psalm 14:1). We think we know it all. We think we've got everything figured out. We think nobody needs to tell us what to do or how to do it. But fools collapse. With nothing but hot air to maintain form, they finally crumple at the prick of the right pin.

The wise confess with voice and life: "The Lord our God is one God." Because he provides structure to support the fabric of life, they love him with passion, and prayer, intelligence and energy.

The only way I know to kill the fool in me—an honest attempt to match my confession of one God with heart, mind, soul, and strength love for him. ❑

Clayton Blackstone is pastor of the Church of New Hope (A.C.) in Lewiston, Idaho. Scripture quotations are from *The Message* by Eugene Peterson. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1993), unless otherwise noted.

God's Weed

Bill O'Connor
Newberg, Oregon

I JUST FINISHED spraying the weeds in my yard. You know, the early spring treatment with a powerful weed killer before the whole lawn and every bare patch of ground is taken over by weeds. In wet climate it's an absolute necessity. The seeds blow in in the fall. They dig down deep in the winter. And in early spring the weeds burst through the top soil in wild profusion.

Pulling all those weeds is an impossibility. A few of them come up easily, if they haven't been growing too long. Others have long, strong roots that reach far into the ground. When you try to pull them, the root snaps off; within days the weed is back again. Digging for the root is exhausting. Getting to the tip of each root leaves your yard looking like a golf course where everyone has forgotten to replace their divots. Without powerful help, you're in a no-win situation.

Where I live, the only way to get on top of the problem is a liberal dose of weed killer. Roundup® is the agent of choice. It's the one that says, "kills weeds roots and all" right on the label. Killing the fruit that you see above the ground—the dandelion or the nettle—isn't enough; to rid yourself of the weed, you've got to kill the root.

Removing bitter roots from our lives

It struck me, as I was mixing the Roundup® according to the instructions on the label, that we Christians often need to have some weeds killed in the gardens of our lives. And it struck me that God has given us the perfect agent for the job. That agent is the Word of God. It has the power to strike to the heart of the problem, not only withering the fruit, but killing the root.

Speaking of but one of many problems which can cause the Christian difficulty, the author to the Hebrews wrote: *"See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many"* (Hebrews 12:15, NIV). I've met enough people for whom bitterness is a problem to realize that he knew whereof he spoke. Bitterness is indeed a bitter root from which many bitter fruits have grown.

How, though, is that bitter root removed? It goes down deep like a taproot. It reaches further than we can possibly dig. How shall we rid ourselves of it? The answer is the Word of God. That's the answer for all the weeds in our lives, and for all of the roots beneath the weeds.

There are some obvious parallels between spraying weed killer on garden weeds and applying the Word to the problem areas of our lives. The same cautions and guidelines apply.

The right dose must be applied at the right time. Random application will not do. Roundup® must be applied directly to the leaves of the plant. The Word must be applied directly to the heart of the problem. The close-your-eyes-and-point system of Bible application seldom works. We must search the Scriptures to discover what God says specifically about our specific concerns. If you're aware of a weed that needs killing—anger, pride, lust, jealousy, greed, dishonesty, bitterness, gossip, envy, and the like—look in your concordance. Find out what God says about it. Then find out what God says to do about it. Follow the manufacturer's directions.

The battle with weeds is nothing compared to the battle to overcome the weeds of the soul. Speaking in a much broader context than spiritual gardening, Jesus said, *"while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared"* (Matthew 13:25-26, NIV). Satan is the enemy of our souls. He sows the seed of spiritual weeds almost as fast as we can deal with them. If we fail to apply

When we start spraying weed killer on other people's yards, we have a tendency to get carried away.

Killer

the right remedy, his life-choking weeds can quickly overwhelm our spiritual garden.

Since this is a spiritual battle, we must not think of ourselves as experts. We're dealing with weeds that require expert advice. Not only do we have the finest book on the subject, we have access to the Master Gardener who wrote the book. And consultation is free. If we need help (and we surely do) all we have to do is ask.

Use with care

We must avoid over-spraying or applying weed killer to the fertile growth in our lives. Roundup® is non-selective. It works on everything. If you get it on your shoes and track it through your lawn, say goodbye to your grass. Believe it or not, the Word has the power to hurt as well as heal, to kill as well as cure. An improper application can be deadly.

That's why it is wise to apply God's weed killer to our own lives, and to allow others to do the same for themselves. When we start spraying weed killer on other people's yards, we have a tendency to get carried away. It is the misapplication of the Word that leads to legalism. The right word in the wrong place produces guilt. Too much of a good thing—and the Bible is the best—can result in discouragement, despondency, and a sense of defeat.

Used discreetly, applied properly, directed at the right spot in the right way, the Bible has the power to deaden weeds while giving life to everything around. Used indiscreetly, the Bible can kill the roses along with the weeds. That's why judgment must always be tempered with love. The condemnation of sin must be offset with the hope of salvation. Guilt must be balanced against grace.

We must give the weed killer time to do its work. The instructions for Roundup® indicate that weeds start to die immediately, but that the effect will not be noticed for several days. It will take as much as four weeks for the weeds to disappear. The Word, likewise, cannot produce miracles overnight. It takes time for the power of Scripture to sink into our souls. It takes time for the vitality of some of the larger weeds to gradually be stripped away. Some weeds are extremely hearty and may need repeated applications, but they will eventually yield to the influence of the Word.

Once the weed killer has done its work, the flowers and fruit must be encouraged to grow. Roundup® stops at killing weeds. The rest of the work in the garden is up to you. Not so with the Word of God. The Bible also feeds the fruit. It nourishes that which remains when the weeds are gone. While dealing with the problem it also magnifies the potential. While removing that which chokes out growth it also multiplies the yield of God's spiritual crop.

What gardeners need is a single product that does it all. Every manufacturer says that they've got it, and some of their products come close. God really has it. Spiritually, the Word of God is the all-purpose gardener's product that does everything we need. It's the ultimate "weed and feed." Properly applied it will do everything that your spiritual garden needs.

It happens every spring. That weed-cluttered garden yields to the power of Roundup,® the weeds shrivel and die, and the flowers come bursting through. Soon the excess of ugliness becomes an abundance of diverse and wondrous beauty as the soil yields the fruit of the good seed we've sown. We couldn't have seen the physical beauty without the application of weed killer; we won't see it spiritually without the application of God's Word. Let the Word begin to do its work in you, today. ❑

Bill O'Connor is a freelance writer and an evangelist with the Church of the Nazarene. He served in ministry for over thirty years and currently lives in Newberg, Oregon.

It takes time for the vitality of some of the larger weeds to gradually be stripped away.

Is God Calling Me?

Marion Damon
Kodaikanal, India

CAN I KNOW with certainty God's will for my life at any particular point in time? Does God still call men and women today to a specific task as he did in Bible times? How can I know if God is calling me?

Note this: God's call is not:

- a personal decision based on a sense of need only
- a response to an emotional urging from within
- an action produced by a guilt complex derived from media reports or missionary conventions

God's call is, first of all, revelational. Revelation is a disclosure of God's plan for your life by the Lord, directly to your own heart. God is the Lord of the harvest, and he has a task for you to do, whether it be at home or abroad. The big question is: Have you yet received from God himself what it is he wishes you to do? This then is a call.

English is sometimes a confusing language. One word can mean several different things. Call means invited. The rich man in Luke 14:16 prepared a great feast and called many. These people were invited to share in the good things made ready by their host. But Paul says he was called to be an apostle. Paul does not mean that he was invited to a feast. He had been appointed by God to a certain type of ministry.

How can I know to what ministry God has called me? To the Jews who were confused by Jesus' teaching, he says, "If anyone wishes to do God's will, he will know whether this doctrine comes from God or not" (John 7:17). This principle holds true for every area of our spiritual lives. Are you ready to do his will? Then he will certainly reveal it to you. He will not leave you in doubt.

Are you ready to do his will? Then he will certainly reveal it to you. He will not leave you in doubt.

God's call is individual. Many Christians do not wait for God to reveal his plan and purpose for their lives to them. They copy the ministry and methods of others. Some believers become discouraged at the very beginning, because they do not have such an attractive leading as someone else. Others may say, "I have prayed, but God does not show me his will."

A call is a very personal, individual revelation by God to your own heart. He speaks to your heart alone in the way which is best for your life and ministry.

In the modern world we have multiple modes of communication: radio, television, computer, fax machines, and even the humble telephone. But whatever mode we use, the instrument must be clean, ready, and tuned precisely. Wavy lines, snow, and glitches all distort and confuse the message. Is your heart tuned into God? Are you even listening to him? What has crept into your life that distorts his message to you?

The apostle Paul, at one time in his ministry, had places he personally desired to go. He attempted to go to Bithynia, and then into Asia. But the plan didn't work. One night Paul received God's revelation: "Go to Macedonia" (Acts 16:7-10). Paul had a group of workers who were also waiting for God's direction. They confirmed Paul's vision. Paul was a great leader, but he still subjected himself to the judgment of others. God's call is individual, not egotistical! There are rare occasions when a leader must stand alone, but even this will be revealed by God and confirmed by the resulting fruit.

God's call is also continual. Walking according to God's will for one's life is a continuous process. Surrendering our desires and plans to him is an ongoing habit. As our spirits are attuned to hearing God's voice, our desires and plans will be formed in our prayer life. We will be daily living according to his call on our lives.

Paul stated in Romans 1:5 that he had received "grace and apostleship" from the Lord. He continually experi-

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That Will Be *Glory* for Me

What does the Bible tell us about heaven?

David A. Dean

Heaven wasn't a popular word at my church when I was a boy. Our hymnals had cautiously replaced *heaven* with other biblical words like "Eden" and "kingdom." So we didn't hear anyone talk, preach, or sing about heaven there. Our people—especially our old-timers—had a vivid and vibrant hope, but it wasn't a hope about "going to heaven."

However, the fact is that *heaven* is quite a prominent scriptural word, appearing no less than 595 times in our English Bible. We may need to be careful how we use the word *heaven*, but we certainly shouldn't be afraid to use it biblically.

Heaven is a good biblical word

In almost every case in the English Bible where we find the word *heaven* it translates the Hebrew word *shamayim* or the Greek word *ouranos*. The literal Hebrew meaning is "the heights" while the Greek word has the slightly different significance of "that which is raised up." The common thread in both words gives heaven its primary meaning of "that which is above." In his book, *The Biblical Doctrine of Heaven*, the late Wilbur M. Smith correctly summarizes what is included in this scriptural term: "the ethical concept of something high as against that which is low, something noble rather than common, something of a celestial nature rather than terrestrial or earthy" (pp. 27-28).

We may distinguish three distinct usages of the term *heaven* in the Bible. The first represents the atmospheric heavens above us, that great ocean of air under which we live, and in which the clouds form and the birds fly. A second use refers to the heavens in which God has placed the stars and planets. This employment of the word comes close to our understanding of the term universe, a concept not otherwise found in Scripture. Finally, *heaven* refers to the abiding place of God. It's this meaning which holds the greatest interest for us in this article.

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Heaven is where God is

Even though the Bible insists that the "heaven of heavens cannot contain God" (1 Kings 8:27) and further proclaims that God is present everywhere throughout his creation. Scripture also teaches that God dwells particularly in heaven. Isaiah presents this truth powerfully: "This is what the high and lofty One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy: 'I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit. . .'" (57:15). The same prophet records the prayer, "Look down from heaven and see from your lofty throne, holy and glorious" (63:15). Without compromising God's omnipresence, our Bible identifies *heaven* as God's special habitation, his lofty position of honor and the special focus of his presence.

This helps us to understand the frequency with which the gospel of Matthew, for instance, uses *heaven* where we would expect to find the word *God*. He tells us of religious leaders who desire a sign "from heaven," i.e., a sign from God (16:1). He speaks of the difficulty of these same people in admitting that John the Baptist's ministry was "from heaven," i.e., from God (21:25). Matthew names God as the "Father in heaven," doing so 14 times of his 71 uses of heaven.

By closely identifying God with his dwelling place in heaven, Matthew speaks easily of the "kingdom of heaven" in situations where the other gospel writers record "kingdom of God." Matthew uses this expression 32 times, in each case employing a figure of speech which substitutes God's dwelling place for God's name. He says heaven; he means God. Newscasters do a similar thing when they introduce the president's words as "a statement from the White House." Like Matthew, they name a dwelling place but actually mean the person who lives there.

Since heaven is the place where God is, all Christians ought to be interested in heaven. We should seek to lay up our treasures there, i.e. with God (Matt. 6:20; 19:21). We should pray for God's will to be done on earth—just as it is done "in heaven," i.e., in his presence (Matt. 6:10). And those who are persecuted for Jesus' sake are to expect a great reward "in heaven," i.e., from God (5:12).

Our future blessings are in heaven

This connection between heaven and the wonderful blessings God will give to his own in the eternal kingdom has captured the popular imagination, both inside and outside of the church. Most people want to go to heaven and practically everyone expects to get there.

Well, Scripture does associate reward and future blessing with heaven. Jesus promised his disciples: "In my Father's house (i.e., in heaven) are many rooms; . . . I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:2-3). His disciple Peter understood what Jesus meant and assured believers that there is "an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:4, 5). We have an inheritance in heaven which is part of our future salvation.

The background for this hope is the scriptural emphasis that sinners are lost and cannot save themselves. Jesus is the only Savior, and salvation is God's work. Our heavenly Father performs this by sending his Son to give us eternal life. Naturally then heaven is the source of our salvation. Jesus came from heaven to live, die, and rise again for us. And our Lord now sits at the Father's right hand in heaven interceding for us (Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:25). He is at this very moment in heaven preparing a place for all who put their trust in him. (These, by the way, are the only ones who will receive the blessings of heaven.) So Christians have every right to rejoice over the prospect of heaven's glories.

Heaven comes when Jesus comes

But we must be sure to follow the Scriptures carefully in this regard. As we connect heaven with our complete salvation and our final rewards, we must also notice that these blessings wait for Christ's return to this earth. Jesus said, "I go and prepare a place for you; I will come back and take you to be with me." Peter promised an inheritance "kept in heaven" until the "coming of (our) salvation. . . in the last time." And Paul promised that "the Lord himself will come down from heaven. . . and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever" (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). Each of these passages—and there are numerous others—make our Lord's return the occasion on which heaven's final blessings come to us.

We will not receive the fullness of eternal life or the other joys of heaven until Christ returns to raise the dead and to confer immortality on those he has redeemed. That's why we are to "wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

Heaven is more wonderful than people dream

Today some people have a limited view of what heaven will be like. They may not really believe that we will sit on clouds and strum on harps, but they envision heaven as a place where spirits live on separated from their bodies. Their ideas remind me of what the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates believed. On the day of his execution, he showed his friends that he did not fear death and explained to them why. He compared his physical body to a miserable prison from which his soul was about to escape at the moment of death. Once free, Socrates expected his soul would be able to enjoy an uninterrupted time of thoughtful contemplation.

But, this popular idea makes heaven a place of subtraction. In heaven, we supposedly will live without our material bodies. On the contrary, the biblical idea of heaven involves addition, not subtraction. This mortal shall put on immortality. This corruptible body will gain imperishability. And in the kingdom of heaven we shall be given glory with Christ, who himself overcame death.

We are not going to heaven without our bodies; rather we'll enter heaven with glorified, resurrection bodies. Jesus has not gone to prepare heaven just for naked spirits. Heaven is for us as whole persons—body, soul, spirit, and anything else that makes us what we are as God's creatures. In the kingdom of heaven, we will be completed and perfected human beings.

But there's more! We, according to God's promise, "are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" (1 Peter 3:13, NASB). Believers will not be exiled to the sky, but will be privileged to dwell in a recreated universe. God will cleanse and renew this fallen creation and "set [it] free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:21, NASB). In heaven, the believer's renewed body will dwell in the splendor of a renewed earth fully as wonderful as the garden God made for Adam and Eve.

Still there's more! For God himself will dwell with his own in the kingdom of heaven. As the old gospel hymn expressed it, "'Tis heaven to me, Where e're I may be. . . If He is there." Well, he is going to be with us here on this recreated earth, as the book of Revelation guarantees, "He shall dwell among them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be among them" (21:3). The same God who created us so that we can only find satisfaction in him will then join us to fulfill that need.

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Heaven is worth waiting for

In view of this great hope, Christians are able to endure all kinds of affliction. Just as I used to survive the pain of the old-fashioned dentist's drill because I knew my cavity would soon be filled, so now all of us can persevere through an ungodly age because heaven is worth waiting for.

The apostle Paul sets us an example in this regard. While he was imprisoned in Rome, not knowing whether his trial would set him free or lead to his execution, he looked ahead to the kingdom of heaven (Philippians 1:19-26). He determined to glorify God in either case: "Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death." But, which would Paul prefer? To be released and face more pain in his missionary work? Or, to glorify God through a martyr's death and find release from his sufferings? "What shall I choose?" he asked himself and then responded, "I do not know!" (v. 22).

He could see advantages and disadvantages on both sides which found himself torn "between the two." And then Paul recognized that he really wanted something else: "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" than either living or dying (v. 23). In using the word "depart," Paul draws on the vivid imagery of a Greek seafaring term. When a ship was ready to set sail, the sailors would loosen the ropes binding their boat to the dock and call that the "departure." What Paul wants more than living or dying is the "departure" which will permit him to be with Christ.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, Paul has already told us that Christians will "be with the Lord forever." And he has told us just when that will happen—when "the Lord himself will come down from heaven." He desires for Christ to depart from heaven and return to earth so that he can depart from this world of sin. That is when he expects his heavenly reward.

And that's just what makes heaven worth waiting for. ❑

David A. Dean is Berkshire Professor for Advent Christian Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in S. Hamilton, Massachusetts.

In Christ We Rest

Freeman Barton

PHILIPPIANS 1:19-26 would join a number of passages which assert the in-Christness of the deceased believer. Paul speaks of "the dead in Christ" (1 Thess. 4:16). "Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's"; Christ is "Lord both of the dead and the living" (Rom. 14:8f.). Death cannot "separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38). Those who "die in the Lord are "blessed indeed"; they "rest" awaiting the resurrection when they will receive the just reward for their deeds (Rev. 14:13).

This in-Christness, however, does not cancel out the fact that "the crown of righteousness" is laid up until "that Day," the day of "his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8). It is helpful in connection with this presence with Christ to compare the intermediate state with the present one. Paul points out that believers are already in Christ. "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). "God raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). Nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:39). Christ expresses this relationship the other way around: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matt. 28:20). Are we always conscious of this presence? Far from it. When we are awake we are often oblivious to it. When we sleep we are completely unaware of it. The relationship continues nevertheless. Why must it be understood otherwise of the sleep of death? ❑

From *Heaven, Hell , and Hades* by Freeman Barton. (Lenox, Mass.: *Henceforth* Publications, 1990), page 78.

The Church That Was Started By Accident

Michael Gantt
Brattleboro, Vt.

SINCE beginning my ministry in East Africa, I have had two major accidents. One was a terrifying skid across the path of oncoming traffic into a muddy ditch as our vehicle spun out of control on a rain soaked highway. The other accident happened on a trip to Ng'arua among the Samburu and Kikuyu tribes when our truck broke down in a place called Ol Kalou.

The entire trip to Kenya in October of 1993 was a disaster. There is no other word that applies. It was one of those experiences that we've all had at least once—some of us more than once—if something could go wrong, it did! This was my second visit to this East African nation where I had already fallen hopelessly in love with its warm and friendly people.

My first trip, just a year before, was a confusing jumble of cultural adaptation, meeting new friends, and getting the feel of this wonderful country. There were no hotels, swimming pools, or fine restaurants as I made good on my commitment to get to know the people of East Africa. I had decided that I would live in their homes, sleep in their beds, eat their food, and travel as they do, which I belatedly learned, was usually to walk. I enjoyed wonderful ministry and discovered life-long friendships.

My head was abuzz with visions of thousands coming to Christ, a literal sea of eager faces streaming out of stadium seats and pushing down long aisles to the altar.

Now being a seasoned veteran of African ministry, we had great anticipation concerning our 1993 trip to East Africa. There was a giant crusade planned in Nairobi each evening in a football stadium. Each day would be spent teaching pastors in a week-long pastors' conference to which faithful pioneer pastors would travel hundreds of miles to be a part of. My head was abuzz with visions of thousands coming to Christ, a literal sea of eager faces streaming out of stadium seats and pushing down long aisles to the altar. I kind of liked the sound of apostle as I increasingly anticipated its addition to my name. Except. . . the crusade never happened and the pastors' conference never materialized because they didn't know I was coming.

Because of a very poor postal system, I arrived in Nairobi to find that our sister church, The Church of Restoration was still awaiting word of when I would arrive so that final plans could be made. They had never received my itinerary so the stadium could not be confirmed and the remote pastors could not be notified of the conference dates. I even had to hire a car to deliver me from Nairobi to Banana Hill, the home of The Church of Restoration, our sister church, where I arrived to face a shocked and disappointed group of church leaders.

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I should have known

How eagerly they had looked forward to my having the opportunity to minister to the people of the Nairobi area. What great expectations they had for the conference where I would be able to share valuable training to young men and women who were at the spearhead of the gospel all over Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Now, we sat together for the very briefest of time with every plan, every goal, every hope and dream dead in the water.

Not willing to allow the trip to be a total waste, we developed an emergency plan. If the pastors could not come to me, I would go to them. We decided to go to Ng'arua, a remote settlement about 180 kilometers due north of Nairobi. I had been to Ng'arua before and several pioneer pastors could be gathered there for some valuable encouragement and training. A call was put out for a team to accompany me and a vehicle was secured.

I should have known. I *should have* known when twenty-two excited young people tried to pack into the old Isuzu moving van that we were headed for trouble. We had asked for ten volunteers. We had provided transportation for ten volunteers. We had food and water for ten volunteers, and when twenty-two showed up I should have intervened, but I didn't. I should have used my good sense and argued that we stay with our plan, but I didn't. I should have gone with my instincts that said the old beat-up truck would not carry this load up through the mountain highlands ahead of us. We had a plan and we should stick to it. But I didn't. I just got into the truck and headed for Ng'arua with twenty-two excited young Africans in the back.

It was about three o'clock in the morning sitting in the absolute dark of the African countryside inside the little van that had overheated for the fourth and final time that I began to rehearse all the things *I should have done.* We had reconciled ourselves to the fact that the little truck that could *couldn't.* Now, with twenty-two people, enough water and food for eleven people, and a blown head gasket, the realization finally came: No matter what I do on this trip, *it isn't going to work.* Instead of humming along through the beautiful highlands of Kenya on the way to Ng'arua, we were dead in the water in someplace I could hardly pronounce—*Ol Kalou.*

It escaped me at the moment that as we worked in vain to restore our failed engine to health, the happy group in the back were laughing, and singing, and praying. As I banged my knuckles on the valve cover over and over again, remembering words I thought had long since been eradicated from my vocabulary, they sang over and over again *God is God,* a favorite among believers in Kenya. I saw, but did not take note of at the time, that as the morning darkness gave way to light, some of the villagers who had been drinking in the nearby *kiosks* all night long stumbled over to see what was going on with this truckload of happy preachers and one very *unhappy* white man. I was pleased to see that two of the men were led to Christ as they passed by this sad, sad scene on the way home from a night of drunkenness. I was pleased, but I was off schedule. *How was I going to teach these young people how to be evangelists?* We weren't going to make it to Ng'arua. I had pastors to teach and sermons to preach, and seminars to conduct. It is amazing how blind seeing men can become.

The realization finally came: No matter what I do on this trip, it isn't going to work.

Hearing for the first time

My interpreter and dear friend, Fredrick Kiongo, remembered that he knew a man near Ol Kalou who could perhaps put us up while we awaited someone to rescue us; which could be a while. We hired a man with a small Toyota pick-up truck complete with broken frame and bald tires to carry seventeen of us the several miles to our friend's home. With happy, laughing people who could scarcely comprehend the gravity of our situation which was getting worse all the time, we bumped along the dusty road to a thatched hut that sat alongside a small pond complete with its own personal hippo, named *Ashooroo* (which means... hippo). This would be my home for the next six days; stranded in the African bush, sleeping with a goat at the foot of my bed and a hippo in my front yard and no idea how *all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to his purpose* was going to fit into this picture.

Ever the teacher, I yanked myself out of bed the next morning before the sun came up. *O.K, the goat tearing at my shaving kit could have had something to do with it.* We gathered the team together to pray, and to study God's Word. After a while, Fredrick and David Wanainia, another of our team members, visited the village elders and obtained permission to hold a crusade in Kariamu township, a little village about five kilometers away. The only problem that remained was publicity. How would the people know to come. We divided up the team into twos and threes and went door-to-door. Over the course of the next few days, several entire families came to Christ and were baptized.

Each night, sunbaked and footsore, I trekked the five kilometers to the village center where we would begin without much fanfare to sing, pray, and worship, and finally, hopefully, *to begin to see some results from this shattered venture.* It is amazing how blind seeing men can become.

That first night it appeared to me that I was about as interesting to these people as old bread. I preached my heart out to a circle of distant, expressionless faces for almost an hour. The response was very far away from the visions of the teeming stadium in Nairobi that filled my mind as I flew out across the Atlantic.

It is amazing how blind seeing men can become.

Not completely broken, but very dejected, I trudged back to our borrowed house and sat down for supper. It was about ten o'clock that evening when the first visitors appeared. *"We have had preachers before, but we have not heard this message. I will hear more."* So seated around a small table filled with chipatti, ugali, and baked corn we talked into the wee hours of the morning about Jesus.

Every night we walked to town to preach. Every night, they followed us home to hear more. Each night the tight little knot of people gathered around the door to the hut grew, and until the final night we were in Ol Kalou, the meeting went on until daylight. The sun found over 50 people still in the compound gathered around the doorway hearing, for the first time, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Recently, I received a letter from Pastor Michael Chege of The Church of Restoration in Banana Hill, our sister church in Kenya. Here is what he says about the church at Ol Kalou:

"Ol Kalou church is growing at a high rate. The boys we were talking to at Kariamu town are giving their lives to Jesus and are seriously following the Lord. There is remarkable increase in membership especially among the youth. We bought for them a one-acre land at Kariamu Town at a cost of ksh 100,000 (U.S. $2,000). We want to develop the land by building a church and a polytechnic."

At last rescued from Ol Kalou, I sat in the little Ford sedan on the way back to Banana Hill. I had left behind 15 dedicated young African men and women, some of whom would find their way back to Nairobi within a few days, or in some cases a few weeks. There were others, some of whom my *better judgment* told me to leave behind when our truck became overcrowded and cramped, would stay on to continue to work at Ol Kalou. Those whom my sense of inconvenience wanted to leave behind became pioneers in a work that shouldn't have happened.

My mind thought back over all the things that didn't go right and the circumstances that left us stranded in Ol Kalou—lost mail, failed communications, botched itineraries, an overcrowded truck. Had any of those things worked according to my plans, Ol Kalou would not have received the gospel. I would have been basking in the glory of a stadium crusade in Nairobi, taking much more of the credit than I deserved; or sitting in a conference center eating fresh fruit, drinking hot Kenyan coffee, and impressing a lot of naive young pastors. Had we limited our traveling party to the original ten we had planned, we most likely would have tooled right through Ol Kalou in the dark of the night, and gone on to visit the already established church in Ng'arua.

I still find that my best work for the kingdom is done when I am completely helpless and confused about what to do next.

Sailing along the rim of the rift valley in our beat-up old sedan, I thought about Paul who set out on a journey to visit the churches he had founded. At almost every turn, the Holy Spirit sent him off in a new direction. Uncertain about what to do next, he sat down to pray by the river and had a vision. He had a vision of men and women in Macedonia who had not heard the glorious gospel of Christ. They pleaded with him, *"Come over and help us."* Again and again, I heard the words of the young man from Kariamu town near Ol Kalou who said, *"We have had preachers before, but we have not heard this message."*

This morning, reading through a letter from my good friend, Michael Chege, I thought of Ol Kalou: *The church that was started by accident.* Over the years I have tried and tried and tried to serve God faithfully and humbly. I haven't been very good at either. I still find that my best work for the kingdom is done when I am completely helpless and confused about what to do next. It seems to be that under those conditions, the Holy Spirit can get past my arrogance and self-sufficiency and somehow use me *even if it's just to cause an accident.* ❑

Michael Gantt is a graduate of Berkshire Christian College ('73) and has served Advent Christian Churches in Vernon, Vt., and Schenectady, N.Y.; as well as the Advent Christian Church and Conference Center in White River Junction, Vermont. Over the past twenty-five years he has been a frequent speaker and gospel musician in many Advent Christian churches. He currently serves as senior pastor of Agape Christian Fellowship, a non-denominational work in Brattleboro, Vermont. He has been for the past five years deeply involved with The Church of Restoration in Kenya, East Africa, in a ministry of church planting and pastoral training among the Kikuyu, Samburu, and Massai tribes.



Gather the Harvest

Betty Converse
Meredith, N.H.

AS I SEE God's glory around us in the colors of the beautiful New Hampshire hills, it is breathtaking! God wants to bring that glory into his church and he wants to use you and me to do it. Do you know what that glory is? It is a people he has redeemed by his blood!

Read Revelation 7:9-13. *"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'"*

A great throng gathered in heaven, worshiping and praising our God! That's the harvest we are talking about. Do you see who is in that throng? People from every tribe, tongue, and nation—our neighbors, our friends, our families—are going to be part of that gathering. And God is giving us the joy of being a part of seeing it happen! He wants to use us to touch lives for Jesus Christ.

We farmed in Minnesota for over twelve years. We went there as greenhorns! We didn't know what a combine was, or a swather, and we didn't know what to do with them. We didn't know what to plant where. And we made many mistakes learning. The climax of the year was the harvest. And we learned there are certain laws of the harvest.

1) If we are going to harvest, we have to plant. The Bible says those who plant little will reap little. Those who don't plant won't harvest. Those who sow bountifully shall reap bountifully. I used to go out into the garden, plant seeds, and the next day, dig them up to see if they were growing. They weren't! I learned that you had to be patient and wait. But while I couldn't see beneath the dirt, there was a process happening. If I had been patient, in a short time, a plant would have burst forth. We plant seeds of the gospel. We want to see the results, and sometimes God lets us. One of my favorite Scriptures says the reaper shall catch up with the sower. I love it. You sow the seed and a harvest appears right then and there. But more often than not, you have to wait.

2) Harvesting is a process. The plant comes through the soil, but doesn't immediately produce anything. It has to mature and grow. True, some plants grow at a faster rate than others. But also true, in Minnesota anyway, we had to cultivate, and we had to spray and kill the weeds or they would take over. This is still preparing for the harvest. It isn't the harvest yet—it is only being patient, waiting for God to bring about the results. Be patient with those seeds you have planted.

The harvest is worth all the effort, all the pain, all the involvement.

Don't get discouraged and give up. Don't think nothing is ever going to happen! If you have prayed for ten years for your loved ones and your neighbor *still* does not want to hear, keep on doing your part. God will do his!

3) The time of harvest. The day came on the farm when the grain fields began turning a deep golden yellow. The farmer carefully watched the grain. All his work, all his effort, all his livelihood depended on gathering the harvest. It isn't enough to plant, or care for the plants, now come the results. The farmer would walk into the fields several times a day. He would break off a stalk of grain, rub the chaff off and bite it. If it snapped, it was ready. Then, the harvest would begin.

We like to think of results, but gathering the harvest was the hardest

part of all. Everything was set aside except the bare essentials. The cows did have to be milked, but the important thing was to gather the harvest. Farmers would not stop to eat. Food would be brought out to them in the fields. They did not stop to sleep if those combines could go. You see, the rains might come and they couldn't get to it. Or it was still in danger of hail, or it could get too ripe and fall off. You would work until you were exhausted. Many times it would be hot and you would be sticky and the grain chaff would cling to you. But nothing mattered except getting that grain in. If the farmer worked so hard for that which will one day be gone, should we work any less for the kingdom that is eternal? Gathering the harvest is not going to be easy. Timing is important. It may have been when you were tired, and all you wanted to do was relax or sleep—but you were needed. Involvement in people's lives is not easy. Demands will be made on you.

4) The results of the harvest. Was it worth it? When it was over and you saw the bins full of grain, you knew you would make it for another year, (you would have the payment for the farm, food on the table, and grain for seed in the spring). You didn't even remember the hard work. You only rejoiced in what was accomplished!

My husband and I go into the prison at Lakes Region facility four nights a week, doing six Bible studies and services. We also have a jail service once a month. My husband works full time as a contractor and I work full time at the church. We often go in tired because it is at the end of a long day. It would be so easy to go home, relax, and go to bed. Is it worth it? I want to share that as we look at Connie, Alice, Tom, Wilson, Scott, Keith, Robert, Paul, Sue, Sandy (and I could go on), I want to say, yes, the harvest is worth all the effort, all the pain, all the involvement.

Who does God use in the harvest? You are either a missionary or a mission field. If you know the Lord, if you have been redeemed by his blood, you do not have an option, it is a command. Jesus said, as strongly as he could, "Go into all the world." One of the greatest harvests in the Word of God is in John 4 where a sinful woman brought a whole town to Jesus. The woman at the well became the woman *with* the well. Dear friends, we know Jesus and have the Living Water. The world is dying for a drink and what joy it is to be able to offer them something that makes "life worth living for!" Together, we can reap a great harvest for our God! ❑

Betty Converse edits *The Friendly Messenger*, the church newsletter of Calvary Bible Church (A.C.) in Meredith, N.H. This article is from a devotional Betty gave at the WHFMS fall rally in Northwood, N.H.

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

May

1 Praise God for his watchcare over Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** during his recent heart surgery.

2 Pray that the Lord will continue to restore Rev. Patterson to **strong health** and that he will be able to return to work soon.

3 Praise God for the opportunities that **Russell Carle** has had to communicate the gospel at two weekend retreats in New Zealand.

4 Pray that God will use Russell and Noelle Carle's ministry through the **A.B.L.E. institute** that they have organized to equip Christians in their congregation for ministry.

5 Praise God for the extended ministry that **Marion Damon** and **Barbara White** are performing on behalf of Advent Christian missions in India.

6 Pray for **Marion and Barbara** as they face several difficult administrative issues and decisions in their work.

7 Pray that God will raise up Advent Christian missionaries to serve on the **India** field.

8 Praise God for the leadership that **Steven and Ann Lay** are providing for New Life Chapel in the greater Osaka area of Japan.

9 Pray that as **Steven and Ann** make contact with Japanese people in their community, that lives will be touched for the cause of Jesus Christ.

10 Praise God for the opportunities that **Karen Rigney** has to communicate the gospel through her English teaching in Japan.

11 Pray that **Karen** will have continued strength as she studies Japanese in language school.

12 Praise God that in 1998, we will celebrate 100 years of Advent Christian missions and ministry in **Japan**.

13 Pray for **David Vignali** as he oversees a variety of

responsibilities for Advent Christian missions in the Philippines.

14 Praise God for **Jeff and Penny Vann**, candidates under appointment for Advent Christian missions in the Philippines.

15 Pray for **Jeff, Penny, and their three daughters** as they prepare to leave for Oro Bible College in the Philippines this summer.

16 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Warren Prestidge** continues to have in providing administrative leadership for Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

17 Pray that God will provide strength and wisdom to Advent Christian pastors and church leaders who serve in the **Philippines**.

18 Praise God for the progress that **Joel and Omegu Garcia** have made in establishing an Advent Christian congregation in La Purisima, Mexico.

19 Pray for **Mario and Elena Cortez** as they begin work to establish an Advent Christian congregation in Ensenada, Mexico.

20 Praise God for the continued effectiveness in ministry that **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** continue to have in El Florido, Mexico.

21 Pray that God will supply for the needs of students preparing for ministry at **Tecate Bible institute** in Mexico.

22 Praise God that he is enabling **Mexican Medical Mission** to rebuild the Hospital Filadelfia in El Florido, Mexico.

23 Pray for **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** as they communicate the good news of Christ's love in the inner city of Memphis.

23 Praise God for a growing number of Advent Christian congregations serving Christ in **urban areas** throughout the United States.

24 Pray for Pastor **R. Johnson**, an Advent Christian pastor from India, as he begins work to establish an Advent Christian congregation among Asian Indians in the greater Washington D.C. area.

25 Praise God for the good response of Advent Christian congregations to **Penny Crusade**.

26 Take several minutes to ask God to bless the ministry of **your pastor**.

27 Praise God for a growing sense of **renewal and revival** among Christians in Canada and the United States.

28 Pray that God will raise up Advent Christian missionaries to open a new field in **Honduras**.

29 Praise God for the continued church-planting work that **Amos Gbaa** continues to do in the west African nation of Ghana.

30 Pray that God would use Advent Christian believers in **Nigeria** and **Liberia** to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ.

31 Praise God that we can have assurance of **salvation** through his grace expressed in Jesus Christ.

Is God Calling Me?

from page 8

enced the wonderful fact that God's grace always preceded the demands of his very turbulent ministry. In any type of pressure, God was supporting him. A continual call guarantees continual grace.

Is God calling you? Today in India we are experiencing a leadership crisis. The missionaries who have served forty years are retiring. Two or three persons or families are needed, not to do the work of the local churches, but to provide administrative leadership. This includes overall support for pastors, oversight of finances and training and discipleship programs.

In short, those who come to replace us will deal with the leadership of a small denomination. There are great pressures, but also great fruit. Come, not because you see the need, but only because God is calling you. ❑

Marion Damon has served as an Advent Christian missionary to India for over forty years. She is currently based in the southern part of India at Kodaikanal.

Editorial

from page 3

known pastor of Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas, challenged the over 40,000 pastors there to put aside a competitive spirit that fragments the church into hundreds and thousands of pieces and embrace our Lord's call for unity within diversity. What happened next brought tears to my eyes. For over thirty minutes, everyone that was gathered in the Georgia Dome stood to their feet and responded in a way that communicated a seriousness about stopping the divisiveness that has so harmed the church in western society.

I'm enough of a realist to know that we're not going to end denominational and organizational differences anytime soon. I don't think that's necessarily a good idea anyway. Denominations, even smaller ones like our own, will continue to play an important role in the overall work of the gospel. And denominations provide a healthy reminder that Jesus calls us to practice unity in the midst of diversity.

But Christians throughout Canada and the United States, Advent Christians included, need to hear Jesus' words about unity afresh. Too often, American Christians associate unity with theological or doctrinal compromise. But the real compromise is much more subtle than that. We've allowed Satan to have his way in fragmenting the body of Christ. That's caused us to focus on our differences instead of on the Great Commission. May we repent of that divisive spirit. My hope is that we're on the edge of a new spirit among evangelical Christians, Advent Christians included, when Jesus' words in John 17 will manifest themselves in our lives and in our churches in a fresh wind of revival. ❑

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

Busyness is an illness of the spirit, a rush from one thing to another because there is no ballast of vocational integrity and no confidence in the primacy of grace.

—Eugene Peterson

Any god who promises to fulfill all our desires is the devil in disguise.

—Donald McCullough

For the first time I understood that my sin was not necessarily and altogether against myself or against my neighbor. My sin was against a holy God who loved me, who had already paid for my sins. I was sinning in the face of his love. I didn't want to sin anymore. I wanted to give my life to Christ, so he could take care of my sin. I sense the beginning of a whole new life, a new structure of life, a life that could fill that emptiness I had even on payday! God for a black man? Yes, God for a black man! This black man! Me! That morning I said yes to Jesus Christ.

—John Perkins

Even though I considered myself a Christian, I had never enjoyed reading the Bible. I had...used some verses out of context to support my racist, anti-Semitic views, but the Bible for the most part seemed ancient and esoteric, hard to understand....This time things were different. Amazingly different. This time as I read the New Testament, it seemed to be ablaze with light and life, with words that spoke directly to me. The more I read, the more convinced I became that I was lost, separated from God by my sin. I soon realized that the profession of faith in Christ I had made when I was in my teens had not brought me to salvation. I had merely given mental assent to truth about Christ, but had not committed myself to him or turned from my sins.

As I saw myself as I really was, I broke down and sobbed...At first the tears I cried were tears of bitterness and sadness because of what I had done with my life. But as I surrendered my heart to Christ and committed my life to him, they were transformed into tears of joy....I was still locked in a tiny prison cell. But for the first time in my life, I was free.

—Thomas Tarrants III

Listen to all the conversations of our world, those between nations as well as those between couples. They are for the most part dialogues with the deaf. Each one speaks primarily in order to set forth his own ideas, in order to justify himself, in order to enhance himself and to accuse others. Exceedingly few exchanges of viewpoints manifest a real desire to understand the other person.

—Paul Tournier

Can you hear Jesus' words to you? He's saying, "I know you're going to fall. To you it may seem like the end. But I'm here, not to whip you into shape, not to laugh at your weaknesses, not to excuse your sin, but to hold you up. What you see as failure, I see as an opportunity to show you My power. What you see as imperfection, I see as an opportunity to experience My grace. I've made it possible for your failure to lead to success. The decision is up to you." What we let failure teach us will ultimately determine how much God can use us.

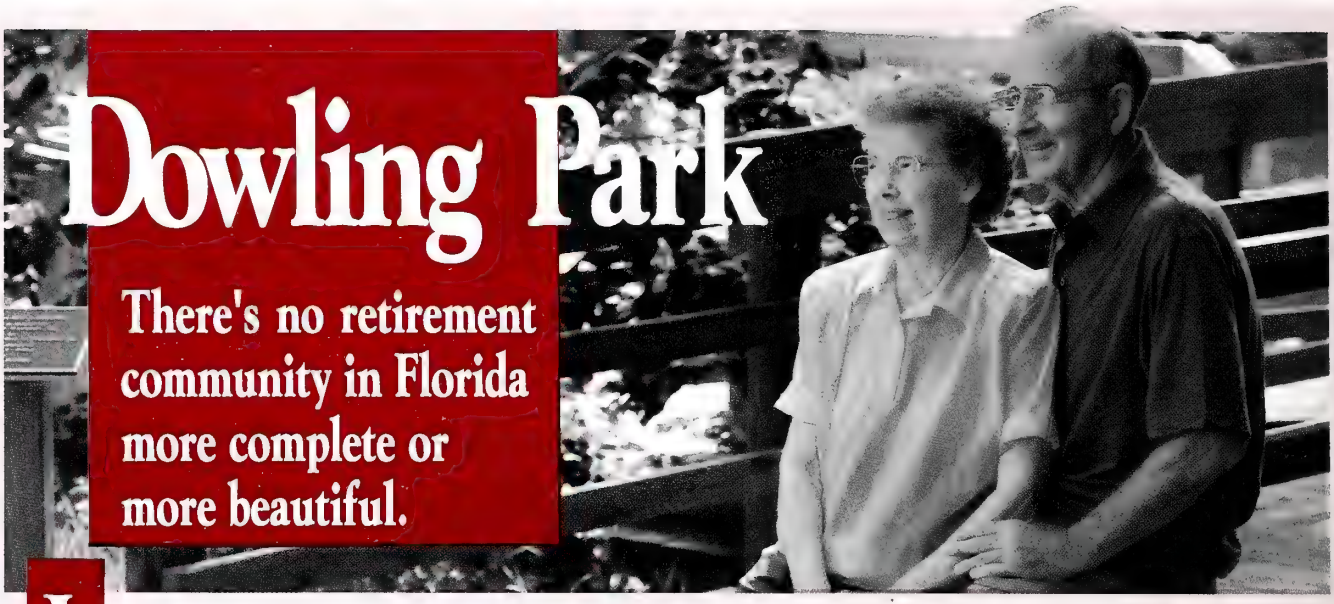
—Rebecca Barlow Jordan

In Other Words

I preached on Ephesians 5, with particular reference to the phrase, "Wives, submit to your husbands." I struggled to prepare for the message, because in some extreme instances men abuse their wives and rationalize it based on this verse. And many women find any talk of submission distasteful. So to be balanced, I first pointed out that in Ephesians 5:22 the Greek word *submit* is not there. Paul uses ellipses: the phrase is dependent on the previous verse which says, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Literally, then the passage reads, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ, wives to your husbands," which means it is appropriate to add *submit* in verse 22, but inappropriate to separate verse 22 from verse 21. Gramatically, you can't do that. "Whatever it means that wives should submit to their husbands," I said, "it cannot be divorced from two other kinds of submission—both people submitted to the Lord and both submitted to each other.

— Stuart Briscoe in *Leadership*

Sources: Eugene Peterson in *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*, (Eerdmans, 1980); Evelyn Underhill in "A Hold on the Eternal," (*Weavings*, Jul/August 1995); Donald McCullough in *The Trivialization of God*, (NavPress, 1995); John Perkins in *Let Justice Roll Down*, (Regal Books, 1976); Thomas Tarrants III in *He's My Brother: A Black Activist and a Former Klansman Tell Their Stories*, (Chosen Books, 1994); Paul Tournier quoted by Dann Spader and Gary Mayes in *Growing a Healthy Church* (Moody Press, 1991); Rebecca Barlow Jordan quoted from "The Flip Side of Failure," *Discipleship Journal* (Sep/Oct '95); Stuart Briscoe in *Leadership* (Fall 1995).



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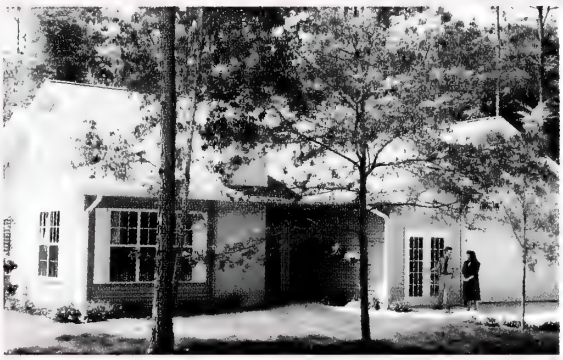
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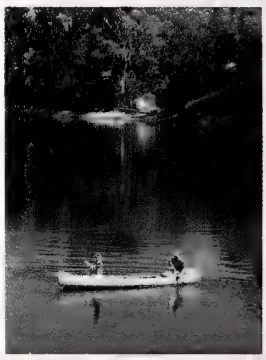
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Advent Christian
WITNESS

May 1996

One to One



The discipleship work of Advent Christian Student Ministries

Features

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photo by Jim Whitmer Photography

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Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy, Timothy Setzer, Linda Leavitt**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria



HUMAN RIGHTS ARE STILL IMPORTANT

TWENTY YEARS AGO, I voted for Jimmy Carter for one primary reason—his stance on human rights. In his first campaign, Mr. Carter argued that if the United States was to take seriously the ideals taught in its Declaration of Independence and its Constitution, American foreign policy must reflect a passionate concern for political, economic, and religious freedom around the world. Whether Mr. Carter's four-year administration lived up to the ideals he expressed in that first campaign is open to debate (I think the answer is yes, but with some qualifications). But twenty years later, I still think Jimmy Carter was on target about human rights.

Sadly, during the last ten years, constructive thinking about human rights has taken a beating in American culture. With the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, we've become more isolationist in our view of the world. As one talk-show caller put it on a program dealing with eastern Europe, "Our best Bosnia policy is no Bosnia policy. The United States has no significant interests at stake in the former Yugoslavia and therefore we should do nothing to help stop the conflict." Combine that popular, but short-sighted, view with the growth of a political correctness that treats every minor political issue as a matter of human rights, it's no wonder why many Americans become queasy when the subject is raised.



Human rights involve three essential freedoms: religious liberty (the freedom to worship and practice your religious beliefs both privately and publicly), political freedom (the freedom to speak regarding public issues within society even if your viewpoint is contrary to that of the government), and economic freedom (the right to participate in the economic and commercial life of the society you live in no matter what your religious, ethnic, or racial background). Christians who live in Canada and the United States often take those things for granted. But many of our fellow believers around the world do not have that luxury.

One such place is the African nation of Sudan. For the past ten years, that country has been governed by a brutally repressive Islamic government supported by Iran and Libya. That government has engaged in a terror and persecution campaign targeted specifically at the thousands of Christians who live in the southern part of the country. Thousands of Christians have been driven from their homes. Villages have been ravaged by government troops. Churches have been burned and Christian leaders have been murdered. Boys and girls from Christian families have been taken from their parents and sold into slavery. The government has attempted to seal off the southern part of the country and not even the Red Cross has been allowed to enter.

There's not much hope that this situation will get better anytime soon. The Sudanese government is far more interested in using force to foster Islamic ideology and practice than in the welfare of its citizens. And why should they stop when the only response offered by the United States and other Western nations is silence. Perhaps President Clinton or Senator Dole will speak out on thier behalf. But I'm not holding my breath waiting for either to do so. After all, it's an election year and both have other things to tend to and constituents to keep happy. Perhaps American Christians will pray for them and speak out on their behalf. But, maybe not. We seem caught up in the isolationist mentality that's gripped our country during the 1990s.

So permit this editor to raise his voice on their behalf. You see, I still think human rights matter. They matter because they grow out of the Christian vision of human dignity that God communicates in Genesis One and that we find reflected throughout the ministry of Jesus. We American

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A Heart for Christ and His Cause

An interview with Student Ministries Coordinator Dwight Carpenter

For the past three years, the Advent Christian General Conference has been involved in a new area of work—ministry to hundreds of Advent Christian college and university students studying on campuses throughout North America. We asked Student Ministries Coordinator Dwight Carpenter about the hopes and struggles of Advent Christian students and how the ministry he oversees seeks to address those issues through its disciplemaking strategy.

How did the vision for Advent Christian Student Ministries emerge?

The vision emerged from three experiences that changed my own life and ministry—my own college experience, the establishing of the Joshua Project with its disciplemaking focus, and God leading us to develop a ministry to Advent Christian college students in the Midwest.

My early college experience was marked by rebellion on my part and a sense of being abandoned because of my actions by a majority of the local Christian community. But time brought healing to those wounds and God was gracious in forgiving and restoring me. And I remembered a few individuals who came alongside me during those tough times. I remembered their faithful friendship, their willingness to share their own struggles and wisdom, and their encouraging me to become involved in a local church. It was then that I vowed to do whatever God would allow me to do to help other students navigate through their college years with a sense of God's love and grace, especially if they had wandered far from him.



After spending several years counseling with young people and attempting to help them put their lives back together, I became frustrated with that process. Then the Lord showed me the meaning of the Great Commission and the importance of making disciples. Initially, I had wanted to help students grow in God's grace before they faced the challenges of life. But as I reflected on what it meant to make disciples, I saw that God oftentimes teaches us through

our mistakes and struggles and that my task was to encourage and disciple students even when they made their own mistakes. I remember feeling a sense of failure when one student I had worked with failed due to falling into sin. But that student said to me, "At least I knew the way back and did not have to spend a long time in the pit."

The Lord often uses our disobedience and mistakes to teach us valuable lessons about following him.

Exactly. And from this point, the Lord gave me a vision for ministry that would allow me to spend a significant amount of time with students where they struggled the most and where their faith was significantly tested—on the college campus. I will always be grateful to the men and women of the Central Advent Christian Mission Society for trusting God to support the general vision we began with, and for their partnership as our focus began to narrow on discipling students. After doing that for several years, primarily in the Central Region, I was approached by the Executive Vice-president, David Ross, with the invitation to coordinate Student Ministries for the entire denomination.

Answering this question is a bit difficult. As I look back, I see mistakes made and unfertile ground plowed. And there are so many people who should be mentioned but I know I would forget several. But I can say that God was faithful and he never allowed the vision to die. He has helped us refine that vision over the years and still is for that matter.

What is the philosophy behind Advent Christian Student Ministries and how does that philosophy determine your approach to ministry with college students?

Making disciples of students is our philosophy and our strategy. They are inseparable. Discipling has many facets—from communicating the gospel to unbelievers who have never heard the Good News all the way to equipping Christians in their own ministry (and everything in-between). We would have lost our focus long ago if we had wavered from the call to make disciples.

Our vision statement sums it up: Impacting students to help them have a heart for Christ and his cause. That means something different for each student and is dictated more by accessibility than anything else. Discipling means personally investing your life in another person to help them move from where they are to where they are going in Christ. And discipling means we work at their pace. Thus, as we work with individuals over time, we move from establishing friendships with them to helping them establish their relationship with God. And then we spend time equipping them for the ministry they are called to, either as a layperson or as someone who pursues Christian ministry in a vocational sense. If we ever forget that discipling is our only purpose, then I am convinced that this ministry will quickly prove fruitless and be forgotten.

> Students need to forge an understanding of the Christian faith that is authentically theirs. Borrowed faith doesn't last.

How many Advent Christian college and university students are studying on campuses across Canada and the United States?

Now you are pushing my frustration button. We have been able to identify by name and school over 700 Advent Christian college and graduate students. But I know that we are only scratching the surface on that. Every visit I make to a church, conference meeting, or college campus results in discovering Advent Christian students that I wasn't previously aware of. One of the areas I know we are not even close in knowing who's who is with commuter students. I think there are probably over 1,000 full-time Advent Christian students. And there are more attending college either part time or in a nontraditional format.

What are some of their needs and concerns?

I think, that in some ways, college students today have the same needs and concerns as students of past generations. But in other ways, they face challenges to their Christian faith that you and I couldn't have imagined,

The Local Church: Our Priority

ONE OF THE top priorities for Advent Christian Student Ministries during the next three years is to help local Advent Christian congregations minister to and with college students—both those going away to college and those living at home.

Student Ministries will be short-lived if its impact and effect are not felt significantly in the local church. Taking this one step further, our hope is to help churches implement discipling from childhood years on. How this process develops remains to be seen but we are committed to being obedient to the Lord in helping build up the body of Christ as he gives us grace, vision, and direction.

—Dwight Carpenter

even twenty years ago. Every student is different. They come from different backgrounds and face different sets of circumstances.

But on the whole, they share several things in common. Students need to know who they are in Christ and what difference that makes in how they live. Students need to know some basic relational skills—how to deal with people who are different from them and perhaps difficult to deal with. Students need help in handling the freedom they are experiencing for the first time in a college setting. Students need help in recovering from poor decisions and in avoiding selfish pride when they make good decisions. Students need to forge an understanding of the Christian faith that is authentically theirs. Borrowed faith doesn't last. Students also need guidance as they wrestle with a host of personal issues. They're often wrestling with sorting through things from their past while at the same time attempting to determine what the future holds.

One thing that has become more and more apparent to me is that we now live in an anti-Christian culture. Students are being attacked daily by the confusion of living in a pluralistic society where even some Christians urge them to be open-minded to things that are not true. The New Age movement has dramatically influenced our society. And the universalistic lie—the idea that truth is relative and not absolute—is a great temptation. Having two college students of my own keeps me informed of these things and often in prayer.

How does Student Ministries make contact with Advent Christian students?

This ties directly to the question of how many Advent Christian students there are. Every Advent Christian student that we have a name for is put on our mailing list and receives our quarterly publication *Coast to Coast on Campus*. Jim Gilroy, pastor at the Bishopville, S.C., Advent Christian Church, serves as editor for that publication and often has Advent Christian students contribute to that publication. I write about opportunities for service, major trends and concerns, and resource recommendations.

A new communication tool is our "listserve." Since most students have free access to the Internet and specifically to E-mail service, we are now able to communicate regularly with many Advent Christian students. Aurora University provides this service of Advent Christian Student Ministries and any student with access to E-mail can have a free subscription to this by writing to Bob Dillon at bdillon@admin.aurora.edu and asking to be added to the list.

We also attempt to communicate with students through retreats and seminars as well as through local churches and publications like the *Advent Christian News*. That is why getting accurate information on Advent Christian students is so crucial.

But your communication with students isn't limited to newsletters and E-mail, is it?

That's right, because our highest goal is for someone connected with Advent Christian Student Ministries to meet with every student regularly. Obviously, this is a huge challenge that we are only able to meet minimally at present. When we identify a college or university campus where several Advent Christian students attend, I try to match those students with a volunteer discipler. This takes time and effort on their part but the results are rewarding for all involved.

I'm always looking for people willing to be trained for this one-to-one ministry. To date, most who have served as disciplers have been men, but our need for women to be involved in this vital ministry with students is crucial. I'd like to hear from anyone interested in ministering to Advent Christian students this way.

Mentoring plays a strong role in Advent Christian Student Ministries. Describe how that works.

It's interesting that you mention mentoring rather than discipling because there is an important difference. It is true that mentoring plays an important role in Student Ministries. But our real goal is to make disciples and mentoring is only a part of that. Mentoring has more to do with counseling and advising. It is about conveying something while discipling is about impacting someone.

> Our purpose is not primarily to form another Christian group on campus but to meet with individual students.

Time, travel constraints, and student choice often limit our ministry to mentoring—communicating the gospel with good counsel and advice, which hopefully has a positive influence on students. But discipling impacts a student's life as we invest in them our own life in Christ. It is more than influencing; it is making a difference for eternity. Our goal should always be to make disciples. In addition to the Great Commission found in Matthew 28, we draw upon what the apostle Paul teaches in 1 Thessolonians 2: "We proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. . . . For who is our hope, or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the pres-

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Peace From God

Dawn Rutan

WHEN I STARTED college I was an introverted, insecure girl. It was my first time away from home, and I managed to go home nearly every weekend during my freshman year. The most outgoing thing I did was to join the college band, where I began to make friends.

Some time during that first year, I was introduced to Dwight Carpenter, the student ministries coordinator for the Advent Christian Church. I don't remember first meeting Dwight, though he remembers it because he could hardly get me to talk. After a meeting Dwight had with the college students at our church, he asked me if I would be willing to be discipled by him. I wasn't sure what this entailed and the whole idea made me nervous, but for some reason I agreed.

I remember writing him a letter, telling him a little about my family and myself. Dwight had learned the first principle of dealing with introverts—writing things down is often much more effective than talking. Whenever he came to town he would take me out to dinner, where waitresses would be puzzled by Dwight's fold-out "map" of spiritual growth, and we would talk for a while. Afterwards, I would write a letter telling him all the things I hadn't said in person. Gradually, as the year went on, I became more open to talking with him and discussing some issues that were coming up in my life. The second lesson for both of us was that it takes time to break down walls.

That first year, I went to the *Friends Forever* retreat in Aurora. I was terrified to be there (and to be considered a counselor for the weekend), and I did my best to disappear into the woodwork. I vowed never to return. But God had other plans for me.

As time went on, we got into deeper discussions of theology, life, relationships, and so on. Even though I didn't always understand what he told me, I appreciated his concern for my spiritual growth and overall well-being.

A major milestone for me occurred during my junior year of college. I was dealing with some tough issues and was getting rather depressed about life in general. The day I was asked to resign from my job as a resident assistant, Dwight had come into town and he took me to a baseball game. We talked as much as I was willing, but mostly just spent time together, away from campus. From then on, I knew I could trust him with anything that was going on in my life.

By the middle of my senior year, when I was sick of my biology major and worried about the future, Dwight and I were corresponding regularly via E-mail. That year I attended *Friends Forever* for a second time, and began to appreciate the contacts with other Advent Christians. At the end of the retreat, when some students were giving their testimonies in front of the whole church, I knew that the next year I would be one of those people.

After trying a few years, Dwight convinced me to join a Summer Ministries team the summer after I graduated from college. That experience was one of great challenge and growth for me. I had to stretch my comfort zones to try to teach young kids in VBS and at camp. At times I questioned why I had agreed to do this when it was so far outside my personality. I took comfort in the fact that it was only a few weeks out of the year. A turning point came when I had to give my testimony at Camp Wilderness. I spent a few hours preparing what I wanted to say, and at the campfire that evening, I was surprised to find that I could say what I wanted without being too nervous about it. I realized then that that peace had come from God, because it couldn't have come from myself. I did my best to be nervous, but God gave me peace in communicating what he wanted me to say.

When I learned that I am loved, accepted, and declared righteous through Jesus Christ, it took the weight of the world off my shoulders.

This year I am a student at Wheaton Graduate School, majoring in educational ministries of all things. I still don't understand just how God got me here, but I know he has me here for a purpose. Early last fall, God graciously helped me see that even though I had done my best to serve him, I really didn't understand my position in him. When I learned that I am loved, accepted, and declared righteous through Jesus Christ, it took the weight of the world off my shoulders. I knew that I didn't need to work to earn God's love, though now I want to serve him in response to his love. After that, much of what Dwight had told me in the previous four years started to make sense. He had been speaking the truth to me. But it took the work of the Holy Spirit to open my heart so I could truly understand. I immediately E-mailed Dwight and said, "I finally understand!"

Dwight and I continue to meet and converse regularly by E-mail. And now I

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What God Can Do

Chad Irving
Tustin, Calif.

MY NAME is Chad Irving, and I'm the pastor of Bonita Avenue Church (A.C.) in LaVerne, California. I have only been a pastor since January 12 of this year. I spent the previous six and one half years as a college and seminary student. In those years, Advent Christian Student Ministries had a big impact on my life, and I know without this ministry, I would not be a pastor today.

My involvement with Student Ministries began two days after I graduated from high school, in the summer of 1989, when I was on the Joshua Project Summer Ministries team for the first time. I consider this the "official" beginning of my involvement with Student Ministries because this is when I began being discipled by Dwight Carpenter. That year I learned a lot about ministry, and what it means to follow Christ.

I had wanted to be a minister since I was 16, but I did not think I could do something like that. So I went into college as an English major planning on becoming a teacher. However my experience that summer, along with contact with Dwight during my freshman year in college at Northeast Missouri State University and a little nudging from the Holy Spirit, convinced me that I was called into vocational Christian ministry, and although I was not capable, God was.

I transferred to Judson College, where I got to meet with Dwight every time he was in Aurora, since Judson is only a half-hour away. It made me feel important that Dwight would drive up to Judson just to spend time with me. I spent the next two summers as leader for the Joshua Project teams. God used this time to teach me how to be a leader and I had a lot of learning to do. I learned a lot those two summers, but I was by no means thoroughly equipped.

Also through the Joshua Project, I served as youth minister at Prophets-town, Ill. Advent Christian Church, which was a great experience. I did this part-time during school and full-time one summer for a little over a year, until I graduated from Judson. During this time I continued to see Dwight every month or so. All of these different things were part of the discipleship process.

The next fall, I moved to Ft. Worth, Texas, to attend Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Being in the same city, I usually saw Dwight at least once a week, and our relationship became closer. This was an incredible experience for me. Between classes, meeting with Dwight, and working with the kids at Perrin Advent Christian Church, God was preparing me for the pastorate. Being discipled and working with a church greatly enhanced my seminary experience. The summer following my first year at Southwestern was my sixth Summer Ministries experience and fourth as a team leader. That summer I finally became the leader that God wanted me to be. It took a long time and a lot of hours put in by Dwight and many others, but I finally got it.

That summer I finally became the leader that God wanted me to be.

I graduated from seminary last December, and came here to LaVerne in January. This summer I am excited to have the Joshua Project team come to my church. I hope my Summer Ministries experiences never end. I know how important Student Ministries can be in one's life, and I want to have a part in it. Dwight has carried a huge burden in Advent Christian Student Ministries. I've seen more and more pastors take some of the load over the past few years, and now that I'm a pastor I want to give my support, and encourage other pastors to join in too. It's amazing what God can do with a young person who wants to serve God, but just doesn't know where to start. I'm thankful that Dwight showed me where to start, walked with me until I got there, then had the faith to turn me loose again. ❑



Chad Irving is pastor of the LaVerne, Calif. Advent Christian Church.

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am being equipped to go and make disciples as well. I am also learning to see God's grace in the events of every day that prove his love for me. And I continue to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." By the way, I was one of the students who gave testimonies at the most recent *Friends Forever* retreat, just as God had told me I would be. ❑

Dawn Ruton is now a graduate student at Wheaton (Ill.) Graduate School, majoring in educational ministries.

ence of our Lord Jesus at his coming? For you are our glory and joy." This is the real joy of making disciples and what turns the Great Commission from a requirement to a delight.

Why is it important to work with Advent Christian students on secular college and university campuses?

In response, I don't want to imply that we don't need to work with students on Christian college campuses. We must be involved wherever we have students. As I say to students everywhere, "You are on mission in one of the world's great mission fields." It is ironic that the greatest strength of a Christian campus is often the biggest obstacle: overcoming the "holy huddle." As a rule, believers spend too much time with believers and too little with the perishing. There is also a tendency to forget that not everyone on a Christian college campus knows Christ or is in an intimate relationship with him.

> I vowed to do whatever God would allow me to do to help other students navigate through their college years with a sense of God's love and grace, especially if they had wandered far from him.

However, the greatest need on the secular campus is the support of other believers as they deal daily with those who are still very much caught in the hold of this world and in Satan's grip. And that means not only great opportunities but significant dangers. We need to be with students in those arenas, not only helping them walk through the land mines of danger they face, but equipping them to reach their peers for Christ. Disciplemaking is not effective until disciples are making disciples on a peer-to-peer basis.

Obviously the larger the school, the greater the need and opportunity. But discipling is done one at a time and we must keep that narrower focus to keep from being depressed by the vast numbers we have not impacted. The genius of the disciplemaking strategy is that every disciple is equipped to make disciples and the multiplication quickly exceeds the simple addition of mass crusades.

Does Student Ministries encourage students to participate in the local church and in campus groups like InterVarsity, Campus Crusade, the Navigators, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes?

Not only do we encourage it, we do all we can to make sure that Advent Christian students do participate. One of the biggest challenges we face is that so many of our students attend schools far from an established Advent Christian congregation. We try to help students see the importance of involvement in a strong evangelical church. And in our campus visits, this is one of the questions we always ask because we feel that there can be no significant growth apart from involvement with a local body of believers.

As to campus organizations, we not only want Advent Christian students involved but we do everything we can not to schedule conflicts with their meetings. Since our purpose is not primarily to form another Christian group on campus but to meet with individual students, we do not directly compete with parachurch organizations. In fact, I have often been asked to speak to students in these settings. A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of speaking to an InterVarsity chapter of over two-hundred students at Appalachian State University.

One of my greatest joys is seeing how many of our students become campus leaders within parachurch ministries like Campus Crusade, InterVarsity, and others. When students are given these positions, the discipling process with them is put on a fast track. The need to be equipped for ministry among their peers is always the greatest motivator for spending time with a discipler.

How does Student Ministries help train Advent Christian pastors and other Christian service candidates?

In each case, the amount of help we give depends upon the student's desire for the type of one-on-one training we seek to provide, the proximity of an Advent Christian pastor/equipper, and the student's commitment to being discipled and to making disciples.

Specialized training and accountability are crucial to the ongoing process of discipling. At the point where a student either discerns God's call to ministry or expresses an openness to God's leading in that area, the equipping process needs to begin in earnest. With several Advent Christian college and seminary students, we have been able to provide field experience and direct supervision. Our hope is to expand this across the denomination and to make sure that each Advent Christian student preparing for Advent Christian ministry is actively involved in an Advent Christian congregation and gaining leadership experience in that setting.

Another key component is helping the student gain a good understanding of what it means for a congregation to be a Great Commission church. We ask students to complete the Sonlife "Growing a Healthy Church" training not only because this helps us develop a consistent ministry

purpose and strategy but because those students who learn and experience the "winning, building, equipping, multiplying" model are most likely to pass it on in discipling others.

What kind of practical ministry experience do you encourage students studying for Christian ministry to be involved in?

We try to provide a variety of ministry opportunities that will allow students to develop their team and leadership skills. Summer ministries is one vital way we do this. Opportunities include leading a summer ministry team, serving as a youth leader, and short-term mission projects. We also work to involve students in camps, retreats, campus ministries, and leadership training opportunities.

One of the key areas in which we are beginning to work is in providing students with an extended internship or practicum in a healthy, Great Commission oriented congregation under the discipling tutelage of the pastor. We're working to identify churches who are open to this type of ministry.

Since our students attend non-Advent Christian schools, it's imperative that we help provide resources and training in Advent Christian history, distinctives, and thought. We attempt to involve students early and often in Advent Christian meetings with pastors and laypeople and try to arrange a time for them to visit the denominational offices in Charlotte. And we're in process of developing a system with regional superintendents to help them identify potential ministerial candidates and help us communicate ministry opportunities to students.

But our disciplemaking becomes exciting when these young men and women are given the opportunity to serve in their own pastorates or places of service. They begin to become the leaders God has called them to be. And that's not the time to abandon them. We intend to work closely with these students and their churches during the crucial early months of their new assignments. I'm thankful that some churches and pastors already have this vision and have been working with these young men and women as encouragers and equippers. The disciplemaking process never ends. It progresses and changes but the purpose is always the same—to disciple disciplers.

Where do you need volunteer leaders to work with Advent Christian Student Ministries?

While there are some campuses on which we maintain a constant presence, there are many others where we will have clusters of students for four or five years and then no students for awhile. Presently, we're looking for Advent Christians willing to be trained as disciplers to help with campus ministry in the Boston area, in eastern and western North Carolina, and the Chicago area. Ask me again later this year and I have a feeling we will be looking in at least four other areas for help. Student Ministries is beginning to bloom and the need for dedicated disciplers is increasing.

This would be a good place for me to add that I am grateful for those who have helped us in the past and for those currently working with Student Ministries. These unsung workers are all busy people in their own ministries. But God has led them to do what they can to meet this growing need. I am tempted to name them here but knowing my propensity to forget, I do not want to risk offending anyone. But God knows who they are and I know that he will bless their faithfulness to the cause of Christ.

What do you look for in Student Ministries volunteers?

I look for people who believe in the Great Commission and who have committed their lives to Christ for that purpose. I look for people with a humble and teachable attitude. I look for people who are available, accountable, and adaptable.

Good disciplers are people who know what it is to be a disciple and who have been discipled themselves. They're willing to be good listeners—people who are slow to give answers and willing to help students "discover" solutions. And they're grace oriented—people who know that all we do is dependent upon the grace of God expressed through Jesus Christ.

We also want disciplers who are committed to fulfilling our vision of Student Ministries and not some other agenda. They need to be people with an unwavering love for Jesus Christ and with a desire to make an impact on students for him.

Paul writes these words to the Galatians; "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly" (Galatians 2:20-21). We look for people committed to living the lifestyle of grace that the apostle so aptly describes here.

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Want to get involved?

ADVENT CHRISTIAN Student Ministries needs volunteer disciplers, both women and men, willing to invest their time in discipling and working with Advent Christian college and university students. If you sense that God is leading you to explore this avenue of ministry, you can contact Coordinator Dwight Carpenter in one of three ways. You can write him at 7917 Kandy Lane, Fort Worth, TX 76180. You can contact him by phone at (817) 581-9589. Or you can contact him by E-mail at Travelrev@aol.com.

ON CAMPUS
Student Ministries

Joseph Pritchett
Augusta, Ga.

"*THEREFORE, go and make disciples. . .*" (Matthew 28:19). This command of Christ has inspired many to commit themselves to minister in diverse places and in all manner of circumstances. One of the most challenging and rewarding opportunities for service in my life is working with Advent Christian college students on the campus of a Bible college in the mountains northeast of Georgia.

After becoming senior pastor of Bethlehem Advent Christian Church in Augusta, Georgia, in July of 1992, I was approached by fellow pastor Steve Lawson regarding a marvelous opportunity for ministry (Steve was pastoring First Advent Christian Church in Augusta). He asked me to consider traveling monthly to Toccoa Falls College where Steve, along with pastors Brent Ross and Tim Setzer, had begun meeting with Advent Christian students who were enrolled there. The college had recently been chosen as the primary site for training in ministry by the Southern and Appalachian Regions. Before coming to Augusta, I had served as an associate pastor in youth ministry and had worked in camping situations with Steve. Based on our previous relationship, Steve and Brent asked if I could lend a hand, particularly since Tim Setzer had just moved from Bethlehem Church to Waterville, Maine. I eagerly accepted.

I must admit, part of my motivation revolved around two of the students at the college at the time. Ronnie Wong and Barry Jones, both from Bethlehem Church, were training for ministry at Toccoa (both now serve Advent Christian congregations), and I recognized the need to keep close contact with them and other Advent Christian students studying there. Steve, Brent, and I had all graduated from Berkshire Christian College and recognized the importance of strong accountable relationships in strengthening ties to the denomination. If left alone, we feared our students might begin to doubt the interest of their own churches.

If left alone, we feared our students might begin to doubt the interest of their own churches.

In the beginning our goals were simple. We wanted to clearly communicate the sincere interest and support of the Advent Christian Church for students preparing for the Lord's service. The contact took the form of monthly gatherings for a worship service led chiefly by the students. One of the visiting pastors would share a devotional on Sunday evening, followed by a fellowship meal. We were also committed to personal contact with each of the students who were available to meet with us on Mondays. Their response was gratifying. Not only were they faithful to the Sunday night gatherings, but they also were quite willing to meet with us personally for counsel, advice, encouragement, and a little reassurance that they were far from forgotten! As Jean Stenroos, a recent Advent Christian graduate of Toccoa, described it, "I knew that they

were genuinely concerned about me and my spiritual walk. They have encouraged me through their visits and helped direct me, even after graduation."

Since Steve Lawson's move to Eastern North Carolina in 1993, Brent Ross and I have continued to meet regularly with "our" students—and we have witnessed some encouraging events. As enrollment of Advent Christians increased at Toccoa, there developed a larger body of accountability and encouragement. One young man was considering an offer to enter another denomination. I see where the Lord used the monthly contact to cement a relationship with this young man, who is presently serving as a youth pastor in an Advent Christian church in the Southern Region. We have encouraged pastors from the Southern and Appalachian Regions to meet with the students from time to time. Former student, Chris Abbott, says that "the visits showed that our denomination actually cares about the Advent Christian students." David Ross, Bob Mayer, Larry Withrow, Marshall Tidwell, and Dwight Carpenter have all had contact with our students on the Toccoa Falls campus. I believe this interest has resulted in the students entering the ministry in our denomination.

> One of the most challenging and rewarding opportunities for service in my life is working with Advent Christian college students.

And the fact of our minority status on campus has served to strengthen, rather than weaken, the understanding of our doctrinal dis-tinctives. Some are shaken by the questioning of their doctrinal stances, but most are challenged to hold firm in their beliefs with assurance from their careful study of Scripture. We have found some very supportive voices among the faculty of the mainly Christian and Missionary Alliance school. An independent study course on Advent Christian distinctives has been added to the curriculum. We have seen a relationship develop between the Berkshire Institute for Christian Studies (BICS) and Toccoa Falls College. Students who transfer from the Institute find that Toccoa Falls will accept most of their credits. The Advent Christian students on campus have served in student government, been chosen as resident assistants in the dormitories, served on traveling music and puppet teams, and played on the athletic teams. As Advent Christians, we can be proud of the way our students are representing us on this campus.

The Advent Christian fellowship has grown to the point of meeting weekly for Bible study and fellowship on Sunday evenings. These meetings have provided the opportunity for Advent Christian students to interact with other Advent Christian students they were not even aware were attending! On more than one occasion we have gathered the students at the beginning of the semester and have them exclaim, "I didn't know they were Advent Christian!" These growing friendships have helped to strengthen the commitments of the students to their denomination. It has proven helpful to gather our students at a central location for their mutual support. Sophomore student Mike Basset feels that, "As an Advent Christian student, you tend to run into certain dogmas that can be challenging. It is a great support to have the fellowship with other Advent Christian students. . . and the support of the denomination through the visiting pastors." Julie Soucy agrees, "It's nice to know that people in our own denomination care enough to come and meet with us to ask us what our needs are and to pray with us. It has also helped the students to become more united." The benefits perceived by the students could be described in a number of ways. Perhaps Tessa Barton, sophomore student from Florida, put it most succinctly: "The discipling visits have been a support in my struggles. They have helped me grow spiritually and reassured me that I have people praying for me."

Our approach has been to meet the students at their point of need, then seek to encourage or counsel them in a positive direction in their faith. A lot of times their struggles will focus on concerns back home, slipping grades, ministry opportunities, or struggling with the intricacies of doctrine and the most direct and loving way to share it. With each student the goal has been the same, to help them experience the body of Christ, even when facing the isolation of the college campus. The rewards are difficult to calculate. Perhaps the most satisfying and measurable response was phrased by Donna Hartis, one of the many transfer students from the Berkshire Institute for Christian Studies. She said, "It is nice to know they (the visiting pastors) are interested in our lives and our futures. It is a blessing to be able to share our problems and burdens with them and have them pray with us. I feel that the denomination is behind us and concerned about us because of the caring ministry we receive each month." By maintaining close ties with our students who are training for ministry, we strengthen our role as a people preparing our world for the soon-coming Christ. ❑

A graduate of Berkshire Christian College, Joe Pritchett is senior pastor of Bethlehem Advent Christian Church in Augusta, Georgia. He volunteers time each month to work with Advent Christian students at Toccoa Falls College in northeast Georgia.

FAITH

The Seed of Greatness

Roy L Morrison
Sanderson, Fla.

WHEN JESUS gave the analogy of the grain of mustard seed, as he equated it to faith, he didn't expound on it a great deal but simply gave one facet of the seed-sowing concept. As I've thought of seeds and watched as spring sprung into life from what was either intentionally or unintentionally sown, I analyze what's actually taking place. Here may be a seed tiny enough for me to put hundreds of them into a thimble. Yet, from this little granule a root system can sprout. That system is so intricate, so complex, so vast that it can sustain the life of a tree for a century, sometimes more.

What's in that seed?

Within that tiny seed (of which the shell covering takes up about half of its bulk) genetic variations sprout that produce the stem or trunk, the branches, leaves, flowers and fruit, as well as the plant's reproductive system. Within that tiny seed nourishment capabilities include hydrodynamic, photosynthetic, and pneumatological properties. In other words, the plant that is produced from that small seed has the ability to draw water into it, take nourishment from light, extract carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and "exhale" oxygen back into that same atmosphere. Thus, we see that God has formed plants to be compatible with humanity in that humankind extracts oxygen from the atmosphere and replaces it with exhaled carbon dioxide.

The seed of faith

So what does all this have to do with faith? When Jesus analyzed our faith with the *size* of the seed, he was giving us the dynamics of how little it takes in quantity to achieve results. He said, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible to you" (Matthew 17:20, NIV). So it isn't the vast size of the seed, *it's what's in it that counts.* It isn't the great size of our faith, what counts is what's *in* our faith. If I want a large tree to grow in my yard, I need not look for a large seed (something like a caladium bulb). Rather I look for the seed with the right properties in it. The size of the seed doesn't necessarily grow a big plant. On the other hand, the tiniest of seeds may have the properties to produce a huge tree that will bear fruit perennially, and have the capability to reproduce itself thousands of times over during its life span. Anyone can see therefore that *it is what's in the seed that makes the difference.* Size has nothing to do with it. As well, the size of our faith has little to do with the results our faith will bring. So we need not desire to increase the size of our faith. Rather we should be concerned with quality—what our faith contains.

Changing our faith

How do we determine what's *in* our faith? How do we go about replacing the negative attributes of our

doubt-filled nature so that our faith becomes pure (hybrid), the type of faith that continually produces prize-winning results. It may sound odd to compare our faith with the hybrid corn that may take the prize at the county fair, but in reality, we are in a continual contest of faith or doubt, faith or fear, faith or failure.

I believe Jesus answers the question about how to determine what is in our faith when he states, "If you remain in me and *my words remain in you*, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you (John 15:7, my emphasis). Notice that Jesus goes on to speak of the seed-producing results of this kind of faith when he adds, "This is to my Father's glory, *that you bear much fruit*, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (John 15:8, my emphasis). We see here that Jesus is speaking of the *quality* rather than the size of the seed. He is concerned with what's in it, not how large it is. He says we can produce good fruit if the content of the seed is of him. Remaining in him, and he and his words in us will ensure top-quality seeds of faith.

Those hybrids don't happen overnight. Like any farmer who is trying to produce the choicest corn, it takes nurturing the best of the seeds and destroying the inferior ones. It is a process that may take a farmer ten or twenty years. I understand that Orville Reddenbacher spent the better part of his life nurturing his dream of making a popping corn that would pop better than any ever produced. Failure didn't stop him, nor the fact that people would scoff at him for spending his waking hours concerned with his quest for corn. He crossbred those pollen-producing stalks until he got what he wanted. Then, because he put in all that work and believed in what he had been doing, he had the faith to take it to the marketplace himself. The rest of the story is a history of success. The scoffers are now eating Orville's popcorn and admiring his determination.

Faith is changed in us through the same process Mr. Reddenbacher used to change the quality of the kernels that came off the ears. It begins at the conception stage. Using the highest quality in the original elements drawn together produce the desired fruit. God's Word tells us to get rid of those things that will hinder our growth and add those things that produce mature Christian living (2 Peter 1:3-10).

The Edison effect

Thomas Edison is always held up as a man of faith because he believed he could produce a light bulb by using electricity and the proper elements. Although he failed at first and people ridiculed him as he worked by the light of kerosene lamps at night, he continued with one principle to guide him: *Every failure is one more step toward success.* Why did he feel that way? Well, Thomas Edison realized that, of the more than 2,000 attempts to produce the light bulb, each failed attempt could be scratched off of his pad. So he used those failures as faith builders toward the knowledge that he was making headway toward giving light to the world. Because of Thomas Edison's hybrid faith billions of people have benefited.

A man of faith

There was a tall, slender man who lived in the 1800s who determined not to let failure hold him back. He had a dream and determined to fulfill it. As far as having appeal to the public was concerned, he had little. His nose was far too large, his rugged face was weathered and bore less than good looks. His gangly appearance seemed frail. He had little experience in the political scene of the day and yet, he decided to run for office because he had faith that God wanted him to serve the public. At first the positions he sought were of a low degree. He lost the elections for the lower offices for which he ran. One day he decided to try for a Senate seat in Washington. Again, he lost his bid. Not long after that he was recognized by a fairly powerful politician, and he was asked to run on the ticket as vice president. Unfortunately the pair lost their bid for the two highest offices in the land. But the thought of giving up was never entertained by this rail-splitter. Instead he determined to take on the monumental task of becoming president of the Union. Why? What would make a man who had failed to be elected to any of the lesser offices he ran for even consider that he would have any chance at all to be elected to the presidency? Was this man simply operating on pride? Did he think in some ethereal realm rather than the conscious, practical reality of the world in which we live? The audacity of such a person! Or was this a true man of faith? Did he have those properties of faith Jesus spoke about that led him to believe the path on which he desired to trod was a path ordained of God, and that he would indeed become the president of the Union? He set out to debate the issues of the day, the great issue being that of slavery. And win he did.

Later, while he rode a train, he wrote one of the greatest speeches ever devised. He was on his way to the battleground where he would address those coming to honor the fighting men at Gettysburg. Honest Abe Lincoln was indeed a man of prayer; a man of hybrid faith.

Many followed his example. Not all will be remembered with the words, "I have a dream" but all did have a dream, a concept of faith that exceeded the naysayers of their day.

Jesus first put it in perspective, then another wrote it as an imperative: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). To be great in God's eyes we must have top-quality faith. We get it by living in him and having his Words live in us. ❑

Roy L. Morrison is the senior chaplain at Baker Correctional Institution in Sanderson, Florida.

The Source of Our Salvation

Edward Fudge
Katy, Texas

IT HAS BEEN said that a question well asked is already half-answered. An editorial in a Christian paper recently queried, "What conditions must one meet to receive grace initially and to continue receiving it?" According to its author, we must believe and obey God to enjoy his grace—although he affirmed that "Christ does not require perfect obedience." I must respectfully disagree with both the question and the answer.

From the Garden of Eden onward, Scripture makes plain that human fellowship with God requires perfect obedience. Equally clear, none of us can bring God such an unblemished life. We all have sinned, and we all continue to fall short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23). And, since the wages of sin is death, every one of us has also forfeited any right to eternal life based on our own performance record (Rom. 6:23).

So how can any sinner be saved? The good news is that God has come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves (Rom. 8:1-4). Jesus came to do the will of God (John 6:38; Heb. 10:5-7). In every thought, word and deed, Jesus flawlessly exemplified God's righteous character. For the first and only time in earthly history, God saw a human life lived precisely according to his will. On the cross, Jesus offered that life of spotless human obedience to God (Heb. 10:10; Rom. 5:18-19).

When Jesus died, he also received in himself the penalty for sin. To a Jew familiar with God's standards it appeared that Jesus was a terrible sinner—why else was he hanging on that cross! (Isa. 53:4; see 1 Cor. 12:3).

The good news is that Jesus did all this in the place of us sinners. His was the perfect *doing*—by which *we* are made holy (Heb. 10:10). His was the perfect *dying*—by which *our* sins are forgiven (Isa. 53:5-6). The gospel is the story of what God has done for us sinners in Jesus. It is "the good news of your salvation" (Eph. 1:13). The work that sets us right with God is finished forever (John 19:30; Heb. 9:12, 24-28). We cannot contribute to it or subtract from it. We can only *trust* it, confident that God is faithful and his promises are sure. None who trust in him will ever be embarrassed or disappointed (1 Pet. 2:6; Nahum 1:7).

> What conditions must one meet to receive grace?

Whoever truly trusts in Jesus will want to do what he says. That certainly includes being baptized in Jesus' name as a public, visible declaration of the heart—faith that only God can see (Mark 16:15-16; Col. 2:12). It includes observing all else that Jesus has taught, confident of his empowering presence although we do not see him with physical eyes (Matt. 28:19-20). But our obedience will always be imperfect; even our best efforts will always come up short of God's righteous standards. We can never trust for salvation in anything *we* have done.

Scripture does not encourage us to think of salvation as a commercial transaction (we give God something, in exchange for which he gives us grace), or even as a joint venture (accomplished by the sum of God's part and our part). It is a free gift, wholly the product of God's gracious love and mighty deeds on our behalf.

The better question is not, "What conditions must one meet to receive grace initially and to continue receiving it?" It is rather, "Can we trust in anything for salvation other than Jesus?" And, whether we look in the Bible, or look in the mirror, the answer to that question is always a resounding "No!" ❑

Edward Fudge is the author of *The Fire That Consumes.*

Mothers—A Force to be Reckoned With

Karl Borchardt

THE FILM "One Against the Wind" is the documentary about Mary Lindell, an English aristocrat living in Nazi-occupied Paris with her two children. While eating at one of the sidewalk cafes, she notices an English pilot who is making a poor show of being inconspicuous. Rather than let him be captured by approaching Nazi officers, she puts him in her car and hides him in her home until he is able to travel. She later becomes the leader of the most efficient underground network saving downed pilots during World War 2.

While trying to help one young flier, the man panics and runs when approached by German soldiers. He is shot. She kneels beside him as he dies. The officer in charge demands to know what the flier said to her. Her reply: "He said what all men say when they are about to die. He asked for his mother." William D. Howells, an American author, put it best when he said: "A man never sees all that his mother has been to him till it's too late to let her know that he sees it."

It is interesting to note that Mother's Day occurs one week before Armed Forces Day, and two weeks before Memorial Day. Military service and mothers seem inseparable. While the men are off doing what needs to be done for a safe and secure country, it is the mothers who are maintaining the home front. At least up until recently.

An article appeared in the *Everett Herald* on January 24, 1995, entitled, "Russian Mothers Pull Sons From War." When the war in Chechnya appeared to be the repeat of the war in Afghanistan, mothers took action. They not only went to the military bases to bring their sons home, at least fifty of them went to the front lines to haul their sons off the battle field itself. Regardless of the country or

At the Altar Rail

Miriam Snow Priebe

THERE WAS a period in my life when a sort of spiritual dryness set in. I went on doing the things I knew I should do—praying, reading the Bible, going to church, taking Communion. But there was no joy in it.

Months passed. Because I was the pastor's wife, I witnessed a great many moving events in the life of our church. I sat in the balcony, watching young couples taking their marriage vows. I had always cried at weddings, but now I watched unmoved. New babies were brought into the church family. I smiled, but my heart was not in it. I attended funerals of dear friends and, although I still firmly believed in the Resurrection at our Lord's return, I did not feel the lift I had always experienced at the funerals of committed Christians.

It was the custom in that church to go forward to receive the Lord's Supper. I watched with envy as others walked to the altar to take Communion and returned with radiant faces. I prayed that somehow that terrible woodenness I felt would go away. I prayed, "All right, Lord, if you don't want me to have feelings, I shall still go on trusting you." Still the dryness in my soul went on week after week.

I prayed that somehow that terrible woodenness I felt would go away. Still the dryness in my soul went on week after week.

One Sunday morning as I sat in my pew, I watched members of the congregation walking up to the altar to receive Communion. I knew each one well, for we had been many years in that church. I knew their problems, their triumphs, and, of course, their shortcomings. I watched these fellow Christians with a certain amount of cynicism. "There they go, Lord," I thought. "They are not a very stalwart band, but you know that better than I do. Still, *they* are coming back blessed."

My turn came and, con-

society, mothers are a force to be reckoned with.

Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians (6:2), reminds us that the fifth commandment is the first commandment with promise. "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you." The question in this country is: How long will the Lord let us keep this land in light of the disrespect that is so evident. We not only need to honor our mothers on the 12th of May, we also need to encourage them to continue their prayers for us. The Russian mothers are beginning to make an impression because they are being obeyed, as well as honored. ❑

A graduate of Fuller Seminary, Karl Borchardt is pastor of the Seattle, Wa., Advent Christian Church.

scious of my own sinfulness, I knelt at the altar and prayed ruefully, "Well, here *I* am too." As certainly as if a voice spoke, I heard the Lord say to me, *"And here I am!"*

I could never describe the feeling that came over me as I was suddenly made aware of his presence. The dryness of my soul was swept away, and my spirit was flooded with God's love and peace. I could scarcely make it back to my seat as the tears blinded my eyes.

Communion has never been quite like that again, but the dryness in my soul has not returned. I have learned one thing for certain: our salvation does not depend on our feelings. Christ is always there, whether we feel he is or not. But isn't it wonderful that from time to time, Jesus makes his presence known to each one of us as he did for me that day at the altar rail. ❑

Miriam Snow Priebe and her husband, Charles, were active in ministry for many years before their retirement in Mechanic Falls, Maine.

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E

S E E K

K N O W

June

1 Pray that God will give wisdom and strength to Asia/Pacific Area Director **George Teshera** who is today travelling in Asia for ministry with Advent Christian congregations in India and Malaysia.

2 Praise God that Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** is well along in his recovery from open-heart surgery earlier this year.

3 Pray that God will give **Rev. Patterson** renewed strength as he resumes his work and provides leadership for the ministry of Advent Christian World Missions.

4 Praise God for new Advent Christian missionaries to the Philippines, **Jeff and Penny Vann**.

5 Pray that the **Vann family** will know God's peace and presence as they prepare to leave for the Philippines this summer to serve at Oro Bible College.

6 Praise God for the opportunities that he has given **Russell Carle** to speak in a variety of settings in New Zealand.

7 Pray that God will give wisdom and strength to the **Carle family** as they engage a busy schedule filled with ministry opportunities.

8 Praise God for a new church-planting opportunity being undertaken in **Tagbalaran**, the capital city of the Philippine island of Bohol.

9 Pray for Philippine pastor **Helix Cabuyoan** and his wife, **Marina**, as they provide leadership for this church-planting project.

10 Praise God for the effective ministry that Philippine missionaries **Warren Prestidge** and **David Vignali** continue to have as they serve through Advent Christian missions.

11 Pray that God will use the ministry of **Oro Bible College** as the school prepares to offer evening classes.

12 Praise God for the opportunity that **Marion Damon** and **Barbara White** had to work with India Conference leaders to organize a pastors' retreat during May.

13 Continue to pray that **Marion and Barbara** will know God's will and direction as they deal with several difficult adminstrative problems on the India field.

14 Pray for **Karen Rigney** as she finishes her final two months of language school in Japan.

15 Advent Christian leaders in **China** need our prayer

support more than ever as we receive new reports of government restrictions concerning church ministry.

16 Praise God for the commitment of **your pastor** both to Jesus Christ and to serving your congregation.

17 Pray that God will give your pastor **courage and boldness** in proclaiming the good news of God's love in the months to come.

18 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Frances and Lyne Ssebikindu** continue to have in the inner city of Memphis as they serve the Advent Christian congregation there.

19 Pray for **Francis and Lyne** as they coordinate summer programs for young people they seek to serve in Memphis.

20 As Advent Christians from across Canada and the United States prepare to travel to Tampa for the General Conference **triennial session**, pray that the Holy Spirit will guide and direct the meetings in the days to come.

21 Pray for **Gary Mayes**, **Eric Lieptke**, and **Mamie McCullough** as they provide leadership for special conferences for Advent Christian pastors, youth workers, and women today in Tampa.

22 As the General Conference meetings officially begin, pray for **Haddon Robinson** as he leads a special preaching workshop for Advent Christian pastors this afternoon from 1:30 to 4:30.

23 Pray that God will move in a powerful way as those attending **General Conference** worship together this morning and evening.

24 Praise God today as we honor with a special banquet at the General Conference triennial session, eight men and women who gave many years of effective service to the cause of Jesus Christ through Advent Christian missions—**Marion Damon**, **Barbara White**, **Margaret Helms**, **Beryl Joy Hollis**, **Floyd and Musa Powers**, and **Austin and Dorothy Warriner**.

25 Pray for General Conference **delegates** as they wrestle with important General Conference business and resolutions throughout the day.

26 Pray that God will give strength to those who serve on the General Conference **Executive Council** as they meet for the final time today.

27 Praise God for two Mexican national families—the **Garcia** and **Cortez families**—who are planting Advent Christian congregations on the Baja California peninsula of Mexico.

28 Pray that God will continue to open an avenue of ministry for Advent Christian world missions in the eastern European nation of **Croatia**.

29 Praise God for his **grace** expressed to us through Jesus Christ.

30 Pray that Christians in Canada, the United States, and throughout the world will catch a **fresh glimpse** of God's holiness, majesty, grace, and power.

Interview continued from page 10

What role do you play in training and equipping volunteers to work with Advent Christian students?

As coordinator I am willing to go anywhere to help train, equip, and mobilize disciplemakers for this important ministry. At the same time my continued interaction with students is critical to the process and to keeping me on target and compassionate for the concerns that college and university students face.

I am asked frequently to be involved in youth and college retreats as well as seminars for students, leaders, and camps, and on-campus events. I have found all of these helpful to the process and would like to be involved in as many of these as feasible. This is the primary reason why I have completed training with SonLife Ministries to be one of their certified trainers. That does not mean that I necessarily need to be "on the program." But it does mean that I don't make a habit of going without an invitation as I do not want to be presumptuous in this. Obviously scheduling is tight but usually with lead time of four to six months, we are able to work something out.

By design and agreement, I work closely with the Advent Christian Youth Commission, particularly in implementing the disciplemaking process in the local church among teens. Our hope is that as students move from high school to college it will be more of a purposeful handoff from one discipler to the next, rather than a fumble or loss. Together, our vision is to help equip those who will be equipping the next generation as well as the students. The earlier discipling begins, the more we will find college students already in process who want, need, and demand the continuation of the process as they spend their college days on a great mission field for Christ.

Our ministry strategy is constantly changing as we adapt to each unique on-campus situation. But our purpose is always the same—to impact students, to help them have a heart for Jesus Christ and his cause. The only way to do that is by making disciples. To that end we are committed and by the grace of God we will be faithful to that vision and call. ❑

Editorial continued from page 3

Christians, who enjoy the benefits of political, religious, and economic freedom, have an obligation to speak on behalf of our brothers and sisters in Christ who suffer terror and persecution at the hands of tyrants like those in Sudan. And if we don't fulfill that obligation, we shouldn't be surprised if God permits a time to come when we face the same hardships. And who will be there to speak on our behalf? ❑

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

In the beginning the church was a fellowship of men and women centering on the living Christ. Then the church moved to Greece, where it became a philosophy. Then it moved to Rome, where it became an institution. Next, it moved to Europe, where it became a culture. And finally, it moved to America, where it became an enterprise.

—Richard Halverson

Only those who don't seek power are fit to hold it.

—Plato

Any god I use to support my latest cause, or who fits comfortably within my understanding or experience, will be a god no larger than I and thus not able to save me from my sin or inspire my worship or empower my service. Any god who fits the contours of me will never really transcend me, never really be God. Any god who doesn't kick the bars out of the prison of my perceptions will be nothing but a trivial god.

—Donald McCullough

In Other Words

Surprised by God's Grace

In the evening, I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even *mine*, and saved me from the law of sin and death. . . .

After my return home, I was much buffeted with temptations, but cried out and they fled away. They returned again and again. I as often lifted up my eyes and He "sent help from his holy place." And herein I found [where] the difference between this and my former state chiefly consisted. I was striving, yea, fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace. But then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered; now, I was always conqueror.

—John Wesley

There will come one day a personal and direct touch from God when every tear and perplexity, every oppression and distress, every suffering and pain, and wrong and injustice will have a complete and ample and overwhelming explanation.

—Oswald Chambers

The hallmark of an authentic evangelicalism is not the uncritical repetition of old traditions but the willingness to submit every tradition, however ancient, to fresh biblical scrutiny and, if necessary, reform.

—John R.W. Stott

We mostly spend our lives conjugating three verbs: to want, to have, and to do. Craving, clutching, and fussing on the material, political, social, emotional, intellectual—even on the religious plane, we are kept in perpetual unrest: forgetting that none of these verbs has any ultimate significance except so far as they are transcended by, and included in, the fundamental verb, to be: and that being, not wanting, having and doing, is the essence of spiritual life.

—Evelyn Underhill

Our predicament is a commentary, not on instruments and instrument makers, but on the human inability to employ both scientific knowledge and technical achievement to bring about the good life and the good society. Man is an animal who is peculiarly in need of something to buttress and to guide his spiritual life. Without this, the very capacities that make him a little lower than the angels lead to his destruction. The beasts do not need a philosophy or a religion, but man does.

—D. Elton Trueblood

When most advocates call for a Christian America, they mean a nation whose laws and general standards of behavior do not offend moral principles as Christians understand them. But by stressing moral behavior, the "Christian" in "Christian America" suggests that Christianity is more about behavior than faith, more about works than grace. To reduce the adjective "Christian" to label mere lawfulness represents a serious compromise of the gospel.

—Ken Myers

Sources: Richard Halverson quoted in E. Glenn Wagner, *The Awesome Power of Shared Beliefs*, (Word, 1995). Donald McCullough from *The Trivialization of God* (NavPress, 1995), 38. John R. W. Stott from *Christianity Today* (January 8, 1996). Ken Myers quoted from *Discipleship Journal* (March/April, 1995). John Wesley from his *Journals* as quoted from *Companions for the Soul*, compiled by Robert R. Hudson and Shelley Townsend-Hudson (Zondervan, 1995).



Dowling Park

There's no retirement community in Florida more complete or more beautiful.

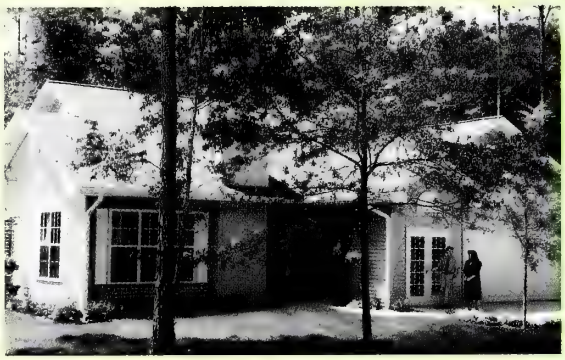
If you're looking for the ideal retirement setting, look no further than **RIVERWOODS single family homes** - the newest development of the Advent Christian Village.

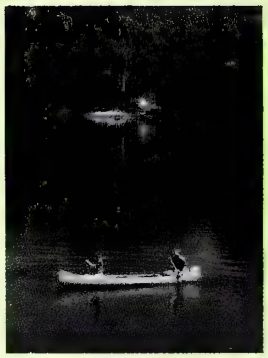
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Advent Christian

WITNESS

June 1996

Each time I witnessed the executions, the greater my dismay and sorrow became.

I decided to join the Muslim army and avenge the loss of my family and my friends.

BOSNIA

A TESTIMONY

Beyond the cross of Jesus, there is life—a life that can save the innocent from revenge.

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He is Enough for Me — 10

Sasa Osmanovic describes the horrors of war in the former Yugoslavia and how he, a Muslim, discovered God's love expressed through Jesus Christ.

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"God can and will use us in a number of ways if we will let ourselves be open to him," writes John Sloper.

God's Work in You — 15

J. Ronald Schoolcraft reminds us that God must work in our lives before he can work through our lives.

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Advent Christian WITNESS

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Sola Deo Gloria



SERVANTS TO A LOST WORLD

EVERY THREE YEARS, as Advent Christians from Canada and the United States gather for General Conference, we take stock of the past and hopefully look forward to what God would have for us in the future. We have opportunity to

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in Jesus Christ, through local congregations being established and strengthened, and through the training and equipping of Advent Christian national pastors and leaders on each of those fields. Some of those same leaders have now come to the United States to enable Advent Christians to establish ethnic congregations here.

So we'll have the privilege of honoring them with a special dinner and reception at General Conference. But as Advent Christians honor the commitment and ministry of these men and women, we must remember the essential reason why they journeyed overseas in the first place. At the heart of the Advent Christian passion for world missions is the reality that men and women are lost for eternity without faith in Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul reminds the Roman Christians that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The essence of sin permeates each of our lives and is felt throughout our culture. We were designed to live in dependence upon our Creator. But we've rebelled against God and seek to live our lives independently of him. We want our will, not his will for our lives. Because of our sin and rebellion against God, we will face his judgment and punishment.

We see the consequences of our rebellion against God reflected throughout our culture. War, violence in all its forms, sexual promiscuity, racial prejudice, alcohol abuse—all of these things have their roots in sin. And because sin is so powerful, we're often powerless individually and corporately to solve with our own abilities the problems that plague our lives and our culture.

On the surface, it looks hopeless. But the Christian faith has at its heart the good news that God has acted through Jesus Christ in a way that you and I can discover forgiveness for our sin, freedom from the bondage that sin can place upon us, and concrete hope for eternal life in God's coming kingdom. That's something you and I cannot discover or appropriate apart from Jesus Christ. God challenges us to admit our sinfulness and turn toward Jesus in repentance and faith. It's only then that we move from death to life, from despair to hope.

It's that good news that these eight men and women gave their lives to proclaim. And it's the good news that God has called not only Advent Christians, but all followers of Jesus Christ, to proclaim. So Barbara, Margaret, Beryl Joy, Marion, Floyd, Musa, Austin and Dorothy, we say thank you for your willingness to give your lives to proclaim that good news. We hope June 24 will be a special evening for you as Advent Christians honor your service to Jesus Christ. But I know that you will see the real fruits of your service on the

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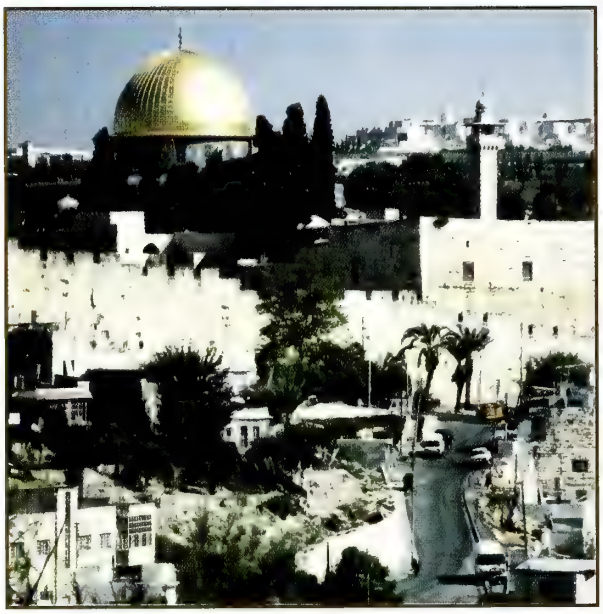
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EVERY THREE YEARS, as Advent Christians from Canada and the United States gather for General Conference, we take stock of the past and hopefully look forward to what God would have for us in the future. We have opportunity to renew friendships and be challenged and inspired by the various speakers and workshop leaders that God allows to be part of our gathering. And each General Conference meeting always has its share of special moments.

When we gather later this month in Tampa, Florida, one of those special moments will happen on Monday evening, June 24, when we have the opportunity to honor eight special people who have given their lives to the cause of Jesus Christ through world missions. Barbara White, Margaret Helms, Beryl Joy Hollis, Marion Damon, Floyd and Musa Powers, and Austin and Dorothy Warriner have each given between 35 and 45 years of their lives to communicate the good news of Christ's love to people in India, the Philippines, and Japan.

As we honor the commitment and ministry of these men and women, we must remember the essential reason why they journeyed overseas in the first place.

God has blessed their ministries in so many ways—through men and women, boys and girls coming to faith in Jesus Christ, through local congregations being established and strengthened, and through the training and equipping of Advent Christian national pastors and leaders on each of those fields. Some of those same leaders have now come to the United States to enable Advent Christians to establish ethnic congregations here.

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Desiring to do His Will

An Interview with Beryl Joy Hollis

LAST YEAR, Beryl Joy Hollis completed over thirty-five years of service with Advent Christian World Missions in India. She has retired to her native New Zealand where Advent Christian missionary Noelle Carle had the opportunity to interview Beryl Joy about her life and her service to Christ in India. Noelle writes, "Beryl Joy is aptly named, for in her countenance is joy. She exudes a deep assurance in God's will, a contentment in surrender to him, and a spirit which understands the peace which comes through waiting on her Master. I was privileged to speak with her about her call as a missionary, her work for forty years in India, and her future work here in New Zealand."

Beryl, what were the circumstances which led you into missions and what kept you there for forty years?

In the beginning the Lord dealt with me on full surrender to him. The one thing I didn't want to do was be a missionary and I told him so. But he didn't let me alone on that and worked with me for two and a half years until I said, "All right, Lord. If you want me to be a missionary, I will." Amazingly, he gave me a joy in becoming a missionary as well as a desire to become a missionary. What kept me there for forty years was simply the fact that I was surrendered to him and desiring to do his will. Until he told me that my time in India was finished, I planned to stay there and serve him.

How did your expectations of India measure up to reality?

When I went to India, I went with the expectations of any young person who has read a number of missionary books. I imagined that I was going to live in a mud hut at a very poor level. Instead of that, I found that we had big bungalows to live in, although we didn't have many luxuries. We had no electricity, no running water, and no flush toilets. And the roads were finished only where our village was situated. From there on it was mud roads and we had jeeps to go in.

Someone asked what was the first thing I saw when I came to India which surprised me. The very first thing was during my trip from Bombay to Madras by train. I'd understood that India was short of water, and I saw people running their water taps in a way that my father would never have let me in New Zealand!

How has India changed in forty years?

There was a lot of poverty and there still is. But I did notice amongst our church people, that they have come a long way in forty years. Instead of mud huts, many people now live in middle-class brick houses. Instead of eating on the floor, they began to use tables and chairs. Many were no longer cooking on wood stoves, but had gas. Some of those who were better off had refrigerators.

We saw that most of them had some mode of transportation, usually a bicycle, and toward the end, motorcycles (though very, very few had cars). So generally speaking, I saw that the level of prosperity in India had risen in spite of the fact that there are still people in tremendous poverty living there.

Did you have a best friend in India? Tell us about her.

Mostly the missionaries were my best friends. I did, however, have one Indian friend with whom I still keep in contact by letter. Her name was Eva Periyanagam. I visited her often. We had prayer together and shared particularly about her family in India and in the United States where some had moved. She was a keen Christian and even now in her old age, she spends time each day in meditation and prayer and sends me a letter occasionally, reminding me of her friendship and of her needs so that I can continue to pray for her.

What are some elements of ministering to Hindus which Western Christians wouldn't understand?

Hindus, as a general rule, will listen to what we have to say about the Bible and about Jesus Christ. They will accept much of it. They will even speak of Jesus Christ as Lord. They'll even worship him without seeing him as Savior, rather as just another god. They may put up pictures of their Hindu gods and a picture of Jesus Christ in the middle of it and worship them all in the same way.

To try to get them to understand the uniqueness of Jesus Christ is something no person can do. Only the Holy Spirit can touch them. They cannot understand why Christians would say that Jesus Christ is the *only* God or the *only* way to salvation.

How did the Indian church experience such growth over the last several years?

The missionaries handed over all the work in India to the Indian Committee in 1978 and after that we began a new ministry which we later called the Blessed Hope Fellowship. In order to be able to find Indian workers we needed to train them, and so in 1983 we began the School of Evangelism in Kodaikanal.

These young men were very, very keen after they finished their training. They scattered out to places where there were no churches. A lot of the people who came to Christ came as the pastors prayed for them, for their illnesses, for their needs and this was a big drawing point to bring them to the Lord. Undoubtedly it was the work of the Holy Spirit also, on whom they relied as they served the Lord in these areas.

In the beginning the Lord dealt with me on full surrender to him. The one thing I didn't want to do was be a missionary and I told him so.

What are the most important things Advent Christians should be praying for regarding the Indian field?

I think perhaps God wants the Indian workers and Christians to rely on him rather than on missionaries. So Advent Christians should be praying that the Christians in India would learn to rely upon the Lord, and not be discouraged, but rather go on with the Lord to new things.

Secondly, it would be good to have missionary leaders there. So pray that the Lord would guide regarding this and supply mature Christians who could go out to India as missionaries. Don't forget to pray for the organization which the missionaries handed over and the older conference as well. At the moment there's a deep division in that conference. Pray for the healing of that division and for the continued growth of the conference.

How are you adjusting to retirement? And how have you been provided for here in New Zealand? What's in the future for you?

I think I'm adjusting to retirement quite well. Fortunately, I'm in the same home, the same area, and attending the same church which I went to on my last two furloughs. This has helped the adjustment a great deal because it's not a matter of new people, new area, new house, and everything. Every now and then I may feel like I should be doing something else, I must be getting on to something else. Then I remind myself, "No, you've got the rest of your life to do this, you don't have to hurry!" I've been provided for wonderfully by Christian friends, particularly those of my home church. They have done a great deal in setting me up in comfortable circumstances in my home, and also providing a car for me. So this is very wonderful and I'm most appreciative of all that's been done in this regard.

Regarding the future, I'm still waiting on the Lord. I had no intention of starting anything for the first three months after I came back, but there are two things in my mind. One is I will probably help with the Bible in schools. In New Zealand the schools are permitted to give one period a week for teaching from outsiders of the Bible and I would like to help with that. The other thing is to keep my mind bright, I'm planning to do some kind of study, not necessarily with any big diploma or degree, but with an aim in view to keep me at it. That also I'm inquiring about at this time. No decision has as yet been made.

Since you've been back in New Zealand, have you observed any inroads that Hindu philosophy is making into society through the New Age Movement?

Quite apart from the New Age Movement, Hinduism itself is making inroads in New Zealand. My sis-

continued on page 14

New attenders, Ned and Nancy, ask an Advent Christian pastor about...

The Law, the Sabbath, and the Lord's Day

a fictional conversation by Tom Warner

Tom: Ned and Nancy, it was great to have you with us in church last Sunday!

Ned: Thanks. Les and Linda invited us soon after we moved here. They've been great neighbors; and we decided we owed it to them to come.

Nancy: I appreciated your sermon, especially the explanation of God's grace.

Tom: Thank you. He has to remind me now and then that the gospel is *good news* and I need to preach it that way.

What denomination?

Ned: Tom, your sign just says North Park Community Church. Do you belong to a denomination?

Tom: Yes, we're affiliated with the Advent Christian Church. Our denominational office is in Charlotte, North Carolina; but, I like to say that our headquarters is heaven!

Ned: Does *Advent* mean you're similar to Seventh-day Adventists?

Tom: Somewhat. We both emphasize the importance of Christ's second coming, or *advent*. And, in common with Seventh-Day Adventists, most Advent Christians believe that immortality is a gift from God, which believers will receive at the Lord's return.

Both groups hold to core Christian beliefs like you'd find in the Apostles Creed. But, in other ways, our denominations are different.

Nancy: In what ways?

Sabbath or Sunday?

Tom: The most obvious difference is that we don't go to church on Saturday, like Seventh-day Adventists do.

Ned: Well, I believe Sunday was the day that most first-century Christians came together for worship. Some Advent Christians called it the "Christian Sabbath," but I'd prefer to call it the Lord's Day.

Nancy: Our Seventh-Day Adventist neighbor gave me a pamphlet about the Sabbath, when she heard we were looking for a church. It points out that the Sabbath is actually Saturday.

Tom: That's true. As God rested after six days of creation, the Jewish

people were also to rest every seventh day (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11).

Ned: But things changed when Jesus rose from the dead, right?

Tom: Well, maybe not overnight. Before long, though, we see Christians coming together on the first day of the week to break bread, and give an offering (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2). It came to be known as "the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10).

Also, we read about weekly Sunday worship services in Christian writings of the second century and after, such as in Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, the Epistle of Barnabas, and the Didache.

Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week (Mark 16:1-9). So, every Sunday is a mini-Easter—a celebration of his resurrection.

Is the Sabbath for everyone?

Ned: Since the Sabbath is mentioned in the Ten Commandments, isn't it for all people?

Tom: The preamble to the Ten Commandments shows that God was speaking to Israel, the nation whom he had rescued from slavery (Ex. 20:1-2).

After the Exodus, Moses and the Israelites came to Mount Sinai, where God gave them the Ten Commandments and a lot of other laws. That's where he made a covenant with them. Keeping the Sabbath was a special sign of that covenant; it showed that Israel belonged to the true God (Ex. 31:12-17).

There's no command to keep the Sabbath until the time of Moses. The first use of the word "Sabbath" is in Exodus 16:23-30. All we read in Genesis 2 is that God rested after he finished his creative work. It doesn't say he commanded anyone else to rest at that time.

Nancy: So, only the Jewish people kept that day?

Tom: Well, if people from other nations converted and became Jews (Est. 8:17), they would keep the Sabbath (Isa. 56:6-8); and they'd be expected to obey all the other commandments, too, because they were coming into the same covenant.

But, now, we call it the old covenant, since Jesus came to make a new covenant (Luke 22:20).

Moral laws last forever

Nancy: You mentioned "all the other commandments." How many were there?

Tom: The Jewish rabbis counted 613 commandments in Genesis through Deuteronomy. Those books were called the *Torah*, which means "law" or "instruction."

There is a different kind of sabbath-rest for us. It's when we cease from our own works to earn salvation and we rest in Jesus' finished work—his death on the Cross.

Nancy: Our Seventh Day Adventist neighbor says the Ten Commandments are God's "eternal moral law."

Tom: That terminology obscures the fact that lots of moral issues are not addressed by the Ten Commandments, but were forbidden by other parts of the law—for example, premarital sex, rape, sorcery, homosexual acts, incest, bestiality, mistreating the helpless, kidnapping, and so on.

Those commands, as well as nine of the Ten Commandments, certainly deal with unchanging moral issues. We're not to disobey those. However, the Sabbath is classified as ceremonial.

Ceremonial laws pass away

Ned: What do you mean "ceremonial?"

Tom: Ceremonial laws were symbolic, foreshadowing what Jesus would do when he came, or picturing something about our salvation. The Sabbath is called a "shadow" because it pointed symbolically to Jesus Christ.

Colossians 2:16-17 says, ". . .let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."

That statement covers yearly religious festivals (which were also sabbaths), monthly new moons, and weekly Sabbaths. All these foreshadowed Christ; therefore, no one should judge us in regard to these things. They're not an issue. Jesus is the reality; we don't need the symbols—we have him!

"Shadow" is also used to describe the Old Testament animal sacrifices (Heb. 10:1). Those sacrifices, along with the Sabbath, are symbolic, ceremonial practices, not unchanging moral duties.

Jesus is our rest

Nancy: I see how the sacrifices pointed to Jesus; but how did the Sabbath do that?

Tom: Sabbath means rest. After six days, people were to quit working for a day, and trust God to provide for them.

According to Hebrews 4, there is a different kind of sabbath-rest for us (4:9). It's when we cease from our own works to earn salvation and we rest in Jesus' finished work—his death on the Cross (4:10).

And, because God gave his Son for us, we can trust him for everything we need (Rom. 8:32-39). We can rest in his faithfulness! Jesus said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

Someday, our rest will be perfect, when we enter his presence at his return. In the meantime, we experience a foretaste of what the Sabbath symbolized.

Is Sunday a day of rest?

Ned: The kind of rest Jesus offers is spiritual. But, don't we still need a day of physical rest?

Tom: We'd all be wise to set aside

time for physical rest. But, the New Testament nowhere states that the first day of the week is for the purpose of resting.

Nancy: I've always thought of it as a day of rest.

Tom: Well, it may be for some of us. It sure isn't a day of rest for me as a pastor! And, there are others in our church who work pretty hard most Sundays.

Nancy: Why would God treat us differently than the Jewish people, who needed a day of rest every week?

Tom: Under the old covenant, the time for rest was to be strictly observed every seventh day. As God's new covenant people, we've passed out of the old covenant "childhood" into a mature stage of "sonship" (Gal. 3:23-4:7), and we're free to apply the principles of the Sabbath law, as we are guided by the Holy Spirit, without being bound to the "letter" of the Law (Rom. 7:6; Gal. 4:9-10).

Ned: What do you mean?

Tom: You might compare this with bedtime rules that you probably have for your three-year-old daughter. When she gets older, she'll be free from the childhood bedtime rules. You'll hope that she understands the principles behind the old rules, and will keep the "spirit" of them. For example, that she won't abuse her health by staying up until 2:00 a.m. every night, even though there may be good reason to stay up that late, or later, once in a while.

That's similar to the difference between the letter and the spirit of the Sabbath commandment, it seems to me. We still need rest, but it's up to us to decide when.

Letter versus Spirit

Nancy: What exactly do you mean by "letter" or "spirit"?

Tom: The "letter" has to do with literal obedience. Romans 7:6 says "we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter."

Certain laws in the Old Testament no longer have to be obeyed literally. For example:

The Law required animal sacrifice in order to approach the Lord.

The Law commanded circumcision for Jewish baby boys.

In the Law, it was forbidden to yoke an ox with a donkey.

The Law specified a seventh-day Sabbath.

Christians approach him through Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (John 1:29). Our "circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter" (Rom. 2:29).

Christians are told, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14).

We find our rest in God's grace in Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:28-30).

As God's new covenant people, we've passed out of the old covenant "childhood" into a mature stage of "sonship," and we're free to apply the principles of the Sabbath law, as we are guided by the Holy Spirit.

In these ways, we fulfill the "spirit" of the Law. To serve God in the "newness of the Spirit" means that the Holy Spirit enables believers to understand the principles behind the old laws, and he helps us to fulfill the essential righteousness that God had in mind when he gave the Law (Rom. 8:1-4).

Work or recreation on Sunday

Nancy: Do you think we're supposed to avoid secular work on the Lord's Day?

Tom: I don't see the New Testament saying we should treat Sunday as a strict Sabbath. It's great if we can use the whole day for church and family and friends—and maybe even grab a nap! But, look closely at Acts 20:7: "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight." It appears to have been a nighttime meeting, since Paul spoke until midnight.

Nancy: Why wouldn't they meet earlier in the day?

Tom: Probably because some members had to work, particularly those who were slaves. At least, that's what some scholars believe.

Ned: So, it's OK to work on Sunday?

Tom: Hebrews 10:19-25 definitely commands us to regularly assemble with other believers for worship and fellowship. So, we can't just opt for work instead of church. However, if a person simply cannot avoid working on Sundays, then he or she needs to go to church at another time.

A few people in our church have to work some Sundays. I've begun to wonder if the Lord wants us to provide another worship service for these people and others like them, maybe on Saturday evening.

Ned: But, if Sunday is the Lord's Day, is it all right to have church another day?

Tom: I think so. Hebrews 10:24-25 commands us to continue regularly assembling with fellow believers; but, it doesn't specify a particular day. In fact, it's possible that some of the Hebrew Christians were meeting on the Sabbath.

Nancy: Is it wrong to go to the beach, or a ball game, or golfing on Sunday?

Tom: Yes, if those activities get in the way of church involvement. If they're done after church, I can't see that they're sinful. But, I'd suggest inviting another believer along in order to get in some fellowship along with the fun!

The New Testament gives us a lot of freedom on the "day issue." We shouldn't violate our conscience, or

cause others to stumble, or use our freedom selfishly (Rom. 14:22-23; 1 Cor. 8:9; Gal. 5:13). The Holy Spirit can guide us in implementing the principles of Scripture (Gal. 5:16; Rom. 12:2). But we shouldn't make laws for each other where the Bible hasn't done that (Rom. 14:5-13).

Freedom and love

Ned: You believe we're free, rather than bound to lots of laws? Won't that open the door to sin?

Tom: We're not under the Mosaic Law, with its 613 commandments, and corresponding penalties (Rom. 6:14; 1 Cor. 9:19-21; Gal. 3:24-4:5). We're under a new covenant with a new law, the "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:21). Several things have changed; but, not the basic moral obligations to God and one's neighbor.

Christ said every command and moral principle in the Law and Prophets was undergirded by two great commandments: to love God and to love your neighbor (Matt. 22:35-40, quoting Deutt. 6:5; Lev. 19:18). Love fulfills the Law (Rom. 13:8-10).

And Jesus added, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34).

Ned: Isn't that the same as the "love your neighbor" command?

Tom: Sort of. But, now we have a new revelation of what love really is. Christ's love for us took him to the Cross and to death! Such sacrificial love had never been seen before. And we're to love one another as he loved us!

The next verse tells us how important this is: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). Remember how the Sabbath was a sign for the Jewish people, showing that they belonged to God? Here, Jesus gives the sign that shows we belong to him: sacrificial love for fellow believers.

How should we "do church?"

Nancy: How does all this relate to what day we go to church?

Tom: Actually, it should help us see that we aren't to come to church merely to "keep a day." We should come to lavish love on God and one another!

The church exists because of God's love in Christ, poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We're a body bound together by love. That's how Jesus said we'd be recognized as his disciples (John 13:34-35).

Nancy: It isn't always easy to love other Christians!

Tom: You're right about that! But the Holy Spirit produces supernatural love in us (Gal. 5:22). As we confess our lack of love and other sins, we can be filled with God's Spirit and empowered to love as he has commanded (1 John 1:9; Eph. 5:18).

Some people like to get dressed up for church. What we really need is to "put on love" (Col. 3:14). More of us need to get "dressed up" that way before coming to church!

Ned: You haven't mentioned the Great Commission.

Tom: That's our job description: to make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). It certainly should shape what we do in church, and at work, in school, in our neighborhoods, and so on.

However, without love, our attempts to fulfill that mission will fail miserably (1 Cor. 13:1-3). The Great Commission only works if we're "infected" by holy love. Then, our faith will be contagious.

Other issues in church life

Ned: I think you're on target, Tom. That describes why we were attracted to Les and Linda, and your church. They've shown genuine love and concern for us.

Tom: It does a pastor's heart good to hear that!

Nancy: In one church we attended, the pastor would often "scold" the congregation to try and get them to attend more regularly. I think that, if the members really loved one another, they would want to come every week!

Tom: I think so, too. Somehow we've got to rearrange things so that our time at church allows people to relate to one another.

Nancy: I like how you have refreshments after worship. That helps people connect with each other. Classes help, too.

Tom: God bless those who bring snacks and make coffee and punch! It's a "no glory" ministry, but an important one. And God bless the Sunday school teacher who understands the need to help people "bond" together, as well as dig into the Word.

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Recommended Reading for Further Study:

Our Lord's Resurrection on Sunday
Three Days & Three Nights Reconsidered by Ralph Woodrow (Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association, P.O. Box 124, Riverside, CA 92502)

From Sabbath to Lord's Day D.A. Carson, Editor (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 49530)

Old Covenant *vs.* New Covenant law
Baptist Reformation Review back issues (Searching Together, Box 548, St. Croix Falls, WI 54024)

The Law/Grace Controversy by John G. Reisinger (GAM Publishers, P.O. Box 353, Sterling, VA 20167)

The importance of love in the church
Loving One Another by Gene A. Getz (Victor Books, Wheaton, IL 60187)

The importance of preaching
The Sacred Anointing: The Preaching of Martyn Lloyd-Jones by Tony Sargent (Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL 60187)

Sasa Osmanovic
Zagreb, Croatia

Editor's Note: This spring, Advent Christian World Missions is beginning church-planting ministry in Croatia. Pastor Desiree Ahola is providing leadership for this effort. What follows is the testimony of one member of the new congregation in the capital city of Zagreb. Out of his harrowing and tragic experience in this war-torn region has come salvation and hope in Jesus Christ.

I AM SASA Osmanovic, born on November 11, 1976, at Prijedor, Bosnia. I am the fourth born of a Muslim family. When I completed my secondary school education in my hometown, I decided to pursue my university education in the faculty of civil engineering in Sarajevo. During my first year of studies I received a call from the Yugoslavian federal army to complete my youth service. I joined the army and was sent to Vukowar. The war started a few weeks later.

Being a Muslim by birth and nationality, and considering that this was an ethnic war, I could not realize the sufferings I would face until the hatred of my leaders was openly manifested. As a driver, I was taking soldiers to the front lines and driving back prisoners to local detention camps. The more the soldiers were facing hardship and resistance, the more spiteful and hateful they became toward the prisoners and we who were not Serbs. Each time I witnessed these executions, the greater my dismay and sorrow became. The day came when I could no longer hide my feelings. My Serb leaders lost patience with me. After all, I was a Muslim like all others!

The morning I lost my tongue, I could not believe that I would never speak again. As I did every morning, I was to drive some soldiers. But this time the federal army was facing great resistance and they thought they would face defeat in some gained territories. I had to drive some prisoners back to our camp. As we were going, my leader, a Serbian sergeant, asked me to stop the vehicle. We were not yet at our destination and this was contrary to the normal policy. I did stop the vehicle and he ordered all the prisoners to come out of the bus. Was this to set them free? Not at all!

The prisoners were supposed to remove all their clothes, to raise up their right hands showing three fingers and at the same time putting their left hands on their breast showing two fingers and repeating, "We are Ustashi." This was a great humiliation for the Croatians. Those who refused to obey this order were killed instantly. Those of us who witnessed this were left with an endless image of atrocity. This was my case. When I saw this, tears started flowing from my eyes.

When my sergeant noticed my compassion toward the prisoners, he became angry at me. My Muslim background only made things worse. He asked two of my colleagues to arrest me. When they seized me, they handcuffed me and forced me to open my mouth. After all the struggle, the sergeant pried open my mouth and with a knife he cut half of my tongue. This was to prevent me from giving testimony of what had happened. I spent six months under intensive medical care. After that I was transferred to Osijek. From there, I moved to Zagreb.

During the years of war, I did not have any news concerning my family in Prijedor. I did write two letters but received no answer. Finally, I met Mr. Sobot, a refugee from my hometown, who informed me of the situation. My father and my brothers were taken to war by the Muslim army and all of them were killed. My mother's fate was unknown. In April, 1993, Pastor Desiree Ahola, when visiting the refugee camp where I was staying, promised to help me find my mother. Pastor Ahola had contact with humanitarian organizations who had

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humanitarian organizations who had offices in my hometown. But contact was difficult to establish. After two months I heard from Pastor Ahola that my mother was found dead in our house sometime in January 1993. What a shock for me! Crying could not help me anymore. I had a situation that I could not change. But I could seek revenge!

I decided to join the Muslim army and avenge the loss of my family and my friends. The day before my departure, I went to see Pastor Ahola to tell him goodbye. Surprised at my decision, he tried to convince me to stay. He told me that human revenge can never be the right solution to life's problems. But God has prepared a solution to all our problems—past, present, and future. And we need to accept God's solution.

He could read from my face the pain of my heart. Finally, Pastor Ahola told me about the great love of the Lord Jesus, his soon return, and the judgment that he has for those who do not believe in him. I was a Muslim. How could I believe in Jesus as God? Pastor Ahola told me again that Jesus loves me personally. He invited me to close my eyes and ask God to show me his way. As he prayed, I felt something strange happening inside of me and a strange spirit of release. When he had completed his prayer, he held my hands and handed me a poem that reads:

"Some day all doubt and mystery will be made clear;
the threatening clouds which now we see will disappear.
Some day our weary feet will rest in sweet content,
and we will know how we were blest, by what was sent.
And looking back with clearer eyes o'er life's short span,
we'll see with wondering, glad surprise God's perfect plan,
And knowing that the path we went was God's own way,
we'll understand his wise intent some day, some day."

—*Anonymous*

I kept the copy of this poem in my bag. But I did decide to go to Bosnia and join the army. There I found no peace of mind in all the actions I was attending. That was not the solution to my problem. What good would it do to harm innocent people—people who had nothing to do with my family and friends who had been killed. I could not find the persons who were guilty for those crimes.

This time I stopped thinking about revenge. One day, while going to war against the Serbs, after an 80-kilometer walk, we came to a church that was destroyed. As my companions and I entered the church, I remembered the words of Pastor Ahola. All was so clear to me, as if Pastor Ahola was just in front of me speaking. In that calm and empty place, I was reminded of the love of the Lord Jesus for me. Tears started flowing from my eyes. This was strange to my friends. The only explanation I had was on the poem I had received and presented to them. They understood my problem and decided to help me. The following day, they drove me to a safe place where I could go back to Zagreb. I arrived in Zagreb in February 1994 by the time Pastor Ahola was conducting a Christian witness program. When he saw me, he invited me to come in front to tell what had happened. He was happy and seemed to know my decision to give my life to Jesus. Since I could not speak, I briefly wrote and he explained to the congregation. Then he turned to me and asked, "Do you want to be a disciple of Christ?" All I could write down was, "yes."

Beyond the cross of Jesus, there is life—a life that can save the innocent and that can save them from revenge. Jesus gives peace of mind and true love for God's creation. He gives hope of salvation. I lost my tongue, my family, and my friends. But I have found Jesus, and he is enough for me. □

Dishes and Whatnot

Miriam Snow Priebe
Mechanic Falls, Maine

THE CUPBOARDS in my cottage kitchen here on the campground in Maine are filled with a conglomeration of odds and ends. Somehow I manage to accumulate more things than I have space for so Charles put in extra cupboards last summer. In spite of that the shelves are already full.

My dishes represent the many years we've been coming here. Each summer we brought along things we no longer needed at home that were "too good to throw away." I have four soup dishes which represent all that is left of a set we bought when we first moved to Delaware in 1952. Numerous odd cups and saucers have been given to us by relatives and friends who hated to throw away something that was still good. Today each brings back memories of people we love and happy times we shared with them.

I have enough matching plates, cups, and saucers of *The Old Mill* pattern to serve five people. They were purchased near Phelps, New York, years ago; but the soup dishes are missing. Numerous juice glasses and several teapots are bargains I got at yard sales across the years.

This morning, as I set the table for breakfast I noticed that the cups I was using were beginning to show the fine cracks of age. Those cups and the matching plates and sauce dishes were my mother's. They were a gift to my parents from the congregation of the Advent Christian church in Concord, New Hampshire, where my father was pastor. I was four-years-old at that time and my mother was only twenty-four.

Mom loved dishes and that set was cherished and used for special guests. The pattern is *Chelsea Ivory*, made by W.H. Grindley & Co. Ltd. How often my sisters and I would wash and wipe those dishes being very careful as they were "Mom's best!" They were brought out for Christmas and Thanksgiving—the big serving pieces filled with mashed potatoes or homegrown vegetables. Baked chicken or meatloaf graced the small platter; and, on the rare occasions when we had ham or turkey, we used the big platter.

As I washed those breakfast dishes this morning my mind went back to the many guests that ate from those dishes. There were visiting missionaries, pastors of other churches, old people who had lost their partners, lonely folks, and the young friends of my sisters and me. We used them for my sixteenth birthday party and later when we girls entertained our prospective husbands.

Tonight we'll have rhubarb sauce in those dishes and give thanks! ❑

Miriam Snow Priebe and her husband, Charles, were active in ministry for many years before their retirement.

God's Way

Naomi Haigler

God makes the wind to blow;
He demands the waters to flow.
He paints the rainbow—
These wonders are his you know.

He sends the rain and snow,
To fall on the earth below.
Directs the seasons to come and go—
The geese to fly in a row.

He permits the stars to show;
Then spreads out the moonglow.
His will these things to bestow—
It's God's way you know.

Naomi Haigler attends Shiloh Advent Christian Church near Monroe, N.C.

The Church Pianist

Peter Bowse

The church pianist is a special one,
His work is never really done.

Everyday he praises the Lord,
With a magnificent sounding chord.

He plays hymns very well,
And maybe even Pachelbel.

And when I grow up somehow, some way,
I will be a church pianist someday.

Peter Bowse is twelve years old and lives in Granada Hills, Calif. His father, Rev. Bernard Bowse, served as pastor of the Valley Advent Christian Church in Arleta, Calif., until November 1995.

Angels Unaware?

John Sloper
Mesa, Ariz.

WHAM! A door to the church slammed shut.

I was sitting in my office in the church at 6:30 one Sunday morning getting ready for the Sunday services. The time in the morning often went to putting the final touches on my sermon notes or whatever else needed to be done before church.

This morning was particularly cold. We live in Arizona, and yes, it does get cold in the desert! Because of the early hour I was startled by the sudden noise, so went to see what had caused the door to slam. It was not windy that morning, so that was not the source of the disturbance.

Cautiously entering the church building, I saw a man obviously in need of help. His clothes were tattered, and he had obviously not taken a bath in a great while. He apologized a great deal, saying he only wanted to get warm.

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Don," was his reply, "I'm really sorry for intruding, but I was so cold outside. I slept up the street under a tree last night."

Seeing his need to get warm, I took him to another part of the church where he could benefit from a more direct flow of warm air, and heated up a cup of coffee for him. He gratefully drank the coffee, and seemed to open up a bit. We talked for a while longer, and I learned he was from Indiana and had been "on the road" for some time. He had been an office accountant, or some such fairly stable occupation. He never revealed why he had left his job and had chosen a life on the road. I felt a good deal of pity for him, and wished I could do more.

I did get a chance to share the love of Jesus with him, both in deed and word, and he let me pray with him before he left. He didn't make any real decision of faith that morning, but I hoped he saw and felt the love of Jesus, and came to know a bit of what a relationship with Christ can mean. He was not rejected that morning (which he probably experienced most often) and he received some help when he needed it.

After he had warmed himself, he thanked me and

continued on page 14

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K
A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

July

1 Praise God for two new Advent Christian ethnic church planting efforts in **Montgomery County, Maryland**, and **Arleta, California**.

2 Pray that God will give wisdom, direction, and guidance to new church planters **Johnson Raja** (Montgomery County, Md.) and **Hector Ramirez** (Arleta, Calif.) as both begin their ministry.

3 Praise God that many Advent Christian congregations have participated in **Penny Crusade 1996**.

4 Pray that Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** will enjoy renewed strength as he completes his recovery from recent heart surgery.

5 Praise God that Liberian Advent Christian pastor and leader **Ben Cleon** has been able to return to Buchanan, a city forty miles south of the capital where he was based before the outbreak of civil war.

6 Pray that despite the ongoing civil conflict in **Liberia**, Christians in that nation will continue to draw their strength from the Holy Spirit and that the proclaiming of the gospel will go forward.

7 Praise God for the expansion of Advent Christian church-planting efforts in **Mexico** during the past year.

8 Pray for the **Cortez and Garcia families** as they continue their church-planting ministries in the communities of Ensenada and La Purisima.

9 Praise God for his continuing supply of the necessary funds, labor, and equipment for the rebuilding of the **Mexican Medical Mission hospital** in El Florido.

10 Pray that God will continue to give wisdom and strength to **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** as they continue to provide leadership for the Advent Christian congregation in El Florido.

11 Praise God for the ministry opportunities that Asia/Pacific area director **George Teshera** had on his five-week trip to India and Malaysia during May and June.

12 Pray for **Russell and Noelle Carle** as they focus much of their work on providing leadership for the

Takanini congregation near Auckland, New Zealand.

13 Praise God for the important interim ministry that **Marion Damon** and **Barbara White** continue to perform for Advent Christian World Missions in India.

14 Pray that God will give **Barbara and Marion** wisdom and discernment to deal with several important and difficult matters connected with Advent Christian mission work in India.

15 Pray that God will raise up missionaries for the Advent Christian work in **India**.

16 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Warren Prestidge** and David Vignali continue to have in the Philippines.

17 Pray that students at **Oro Bible College** will experience God's supply for their spiritual and material needs.

18 Praise God for our newest missionary family—**Jeff and Penny Vann** and their three children.

19 Pray that God will give the **Vann family** his wisdom and strength as they prepare to leave for the Philippines.

20 Praise God for the opportunity that **Steven and Ann Lay** had to communicate their Christian testimonies to young people at the youth camp sponsored by the Japan Conference.

21 Pray that lives will be touched for the gospel through the church-planting work the Japan Advent Christian missionaries—**Karen Rigney** and **Steven and Ann Lay**—are currently engaged in.

22 Praise God for Advent Christian students currently serving with summer ministry teams and with short-term mission projects through **Teen Missions**.

23 Pray that God will raise up Advent Christian missionaries to begin ministry in **Honduras**.

24 Praise God for the effective ministry that **David Dean** has had as director of the Center for Advent Christian Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

25 Pray that God will guide the **Berkshire Christian College** board of regents as they search for Dr. Dean's replacement.

26 Praise God for the opportunity that Advent Christian Missions has to begin church-planting ministry in the eastern European nation of **Croatia**.

27 Pray for Advent Christian church planter **Desiree Aloha** as he works to establish an Advent Christian congregation in the Croatian capital of Zagreb.

28 Pray that God will direct our efforts to complete **registration** of the Advent Christian Church with the Croatian government.

29 Praise God for the Christian commitment and service that **your pastor** provides for your church.

30 Pray that **your pastor** will sense the Holy Spirit's leading in a special way today.

31 Praise God for his **grace** expressed to us through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Desiring continued from page 5

ter from Wellington has written that in her own suburb, the Hindus are going to build a temple right in the shopping area. She also writes how some Christians from the church trying to reach out to Hindus during a crafts class, found that the Hindus, rather, tried to persuade the Christians to celebrate their festivals, rather than being interested in anything they had to say about Christianity.

Regarding the New Age Movement, what I have read about it shows that it contains a good deal that is purely and simply Hindu philosophy, particularly the philosophy of reincarnation. This has become a common belief amongst New Zealanders who are following the New Age Movement.

As we conclude, is there anything you would like to share with our readers?

I have been happy to serve the Lord for forty years in India. He's been with me all the way and all the time. For anyone reading this interview, I suggest that it's not worthwhile to buck the Lord, but it is worthwhile to surrender yourself completely to him for whatever he wants you to do. It may not be missions. It probably won't be missions. But make sure that your surrender is a complete surrender that holds nothing back from the Lord, and He will bless you, lead you and guide you, not only for forty years, but for the rest of your life. ❑

Angels continued from page 13

went out on his way toward the next town. I watched as he shuffled down the street to the main road out of town to try to get a ride. As he left I could not help but think of the verse in Hebrews 13:2, "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it." I don't think he was an angel, but I believe I was fulfilling the intent of the verse. I pray for him from time to time, hoping that he will come to know Jesus Christ and be able to rest from his wanderings and know the love of God for himself.

God can and will use us in any number of ways, if we will let ourselves be open to him. He often does not do things the way we might like them to be done, and so sometimes we get surprised—especially at 6:30 in the morning! ❑

John Sloper is a graduate of Simpson College and attended Parkside Community Church (A.C.) in San Francisco during the 1970s. He pastors a Free Methodist congregation in Arizona.

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Lord's Day from page 9

There are all sorts of ways we can make opportunity for greater relational health in the body. I'm sure no expert at this; but, I've started to see how important it is.

Ned: When I was a kid, people would invite others to dinner after church a lot more than they do these days.

Tom: Hospitality is so important that it's in the list of qualifications for church leadership (1 Tim. 3:2). All believers are commanded to practice hospitality (Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:1-2). We need to open our homes and hearts to others.

Speaking of hospitality, thanks for letting me stay so long! You've sure been patient with my long-winded answers.

Ned: We've enjoyed it! Thanks for coming. See you Sunday! ❑

Tom Warner is pastor of North Park Community Church (A.C.) in San Diego, Calif. Scripture quotations are from the New King James Bible.

Editorial from page 3

day that John describes in Revelation 7: "There before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb." On that day when God's kingdom is inaugurated at the return of Jesus Christ, there will be men and women who are there because of your faithfulness to proclaim the good news of God's grace expressed through Jesus Christ. ❑

God's Work in You

J. Ronald Schoolcraft
Jacksonville, Fla.

I'M NOT A "television bug." Nei ther am I what some call a "couch potato." However, during recovery time after my recent major surgery (thirty days I could not drive the car, mow the lawn, or pick up anything heavier than a fork full of food) I watched some television programs just to keep from climbing the walls!

I do not recall what program it was. But the minister said something that has stuck with me. He said, "God must work a work within you before he can work through you." Think about that for a moment. It is totally in line with the teaching of Scripture. You cannot communicate to someone else that which you do not possess! Something must happen within your heart! Some call it conversion. Others call it being born-again. Call it what you will—a change of heart, or receiving Christ. (But don't confuse it with turning over a new leaf, or New Year's resolutions.)

It is an absolute must! Every one who hopes to be used of Jesus and have assurance of everlasting life when he comes again, must come to the place where he or she repents of (turns away from) their sin, asks Jesus to forgive, and determines to follow Christ and his example.

When Isaiah got a vision of the holiness of God, he saw himself as a sinner, admitted it, and received cleansing by the fire of God. It was not until then that he could answer the call, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" saying, "Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

In most every undertaking the intelligent person considers the task, the available resources, and the goal to be achieved. Certainly all necessary resources are available to the person who enters the race for eternal life! In fact, we are told that our God will do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). You have but to trust him!

First of all, as I said earlier, sin must be dealt with. And John declares, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Christ is eagerly awaiting you to make this move. He says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man will hear my voice, and will open the door, I will come in to him..." (Revelation 3:20).

Second, once you pledge your allegiance to Jesus Christ he gives you his Holy Spirit and assures you of his companionship throughout your journey to the kingdom eternal.

In his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter challenged his listeners (and you and me) to, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

I love the promise Jesus makes to those who love and serve him, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him and we will come to him, and make our home with him" (John 14:23). Certainly everything you need, and more, for living a godly life and allowing Jesus to work through you is available for the trusting! There is no greater joy than to realize that Christ is using you in the battle against Satan today! But remember, "God must do a work within you before he can work through you!" ❑

Veteran Advent Christian pastor J. Ronald Schoolcraft lives in Jacksonville, Fla., and serves as an elder at West Jacksonville Advent Christian Church.

Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
Box 17, Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Marion Damon (March 27)
Box 17, Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Beryl Joy Hollis (December 16)
39B Belmont Terrace
Milford
North Shore City
NEW ZEALAND

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Warren Prestidge
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Margaret Helms (September 18)
c/o Pat Jenkins
3612 Brief Rd. E.
Monroe, NC 28110

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-794-62-8744

Karen Rigney (June 5)
Sunny Coop Futaba #201
80-1666 Tenjincho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN

New Zealand

Russell and Noelle Carle
(December 30 and December 19)
(Ryan, November 15, 1979)
(Emily, June 23, 1983)
(Peter, August 14, 1991)
11 Rosehill Dr.
Papakura
Auckland 1702
NEW ZEALAND

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
Buduburam Refugee Camp
National Mobilization Program
Box 46
Accra, GHANA

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

Liberia and China
Our pastor in China
(September 30 and October 26)
All correspondence should be channelled through the missions office.

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devasahayam
Beulah Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Mexico

Carlos Quintero
387 W. Poppyfields Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
(818) 791-2447

Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Carlos Quintero

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Vice-president
Harold Patterson; World Missions
Millie Griswold; Resource Development

P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

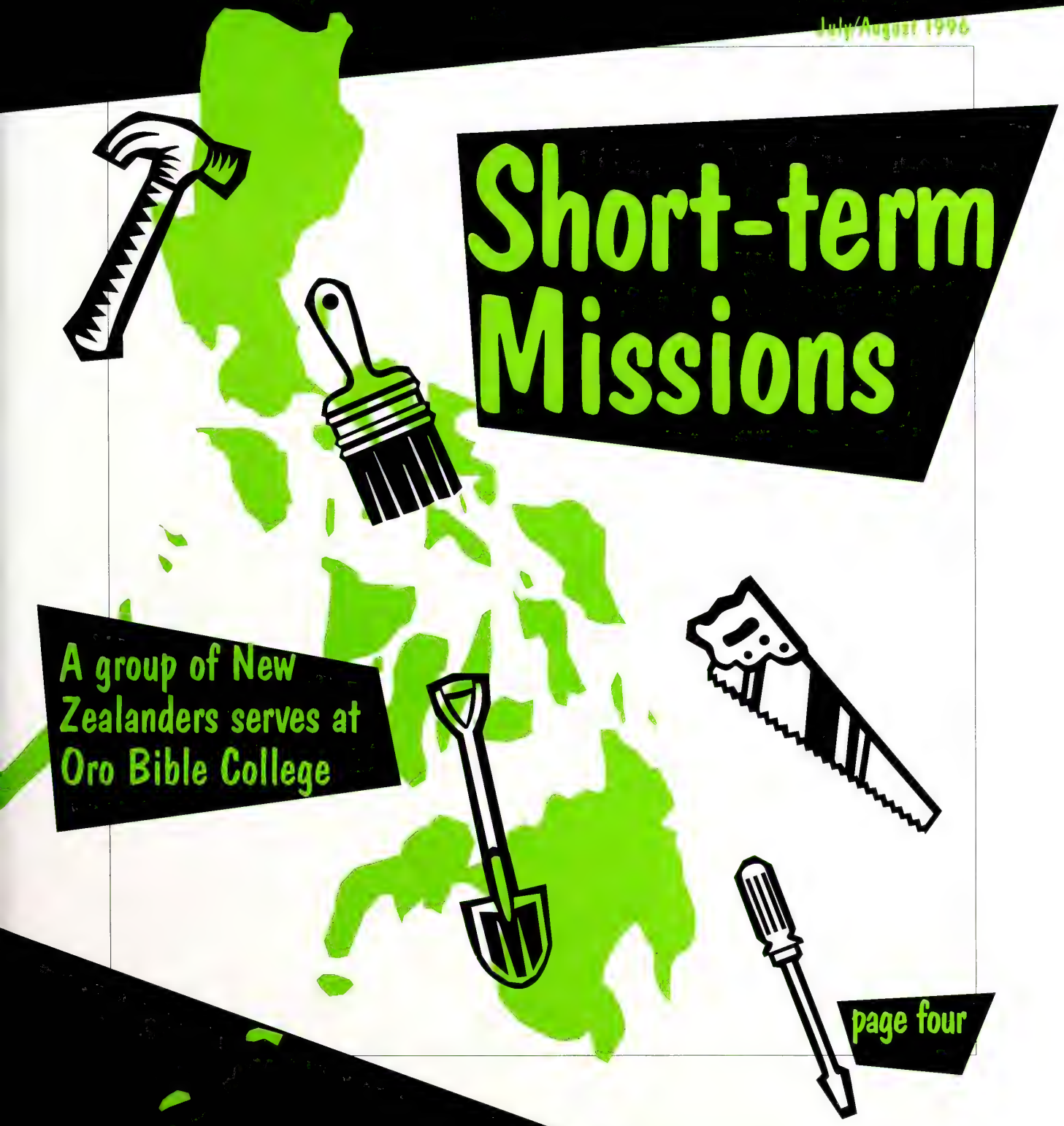
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July/August 1996



Short-term Missions

A group of New Zealanders serves at Oro Bible College

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New Zealand missionary Russell Carle describes the opportunity he had to serve with a short-term missions group from New Zealand at Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

Gimme that Ole Cafeteria Style Righteousness 6

We live in a world filled with choice even in our church lives. "But when our values clash with God's," writes Clayton Blackstone, "we need to learn a new tune."

Church Bell Rings Once Again 9

At the North Springfield, Vermont, Advent Christian Church, the bell that signaled time for worship had been silent for over twenty years. But then. . .

Our Purpose as a Church 10

Why does a local church exist? Jesus commissioned churches to make disciples. That's how we measure success, according to Pastor Tom Warner.

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Advent Christian Missions involves people throughout the world. This month Russell Carle tells the story of a group of New Zealanders on a short term Missions trip to the Philippines.

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Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy, Timothy Setzer, Linda Leavitt**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria



Old Myths Die Hard

THE MYTH. Although it's as old as humanity itself, in our age of technology and scientific advance the myth has become especially powerful. We hear the myth every day in politically correct ways from politicians, celebrities, and the media.

It's the notion that human beings like you and I, acting on our own, can solve our most perplexing social problems and fulfill our needs and desires. World peace? No problem. We'll figure out a way to stop war and violence. Prejudice? We'll eliminate it through education. Poverty? We'll program our way out of it. Personal problems? You can solve them simply by changing your circumstances. These notions are the product of nineteenth-century European liberalism—a liberalism that saw human nature as essentially good and the human intellect as capable of providing explanations and solutions for everything.

We who follow Jesus can be optimistic, not because of some notion of human progress, but because we know that when Jesus Christ returns to earth, God will complete his work.

There's one problem. The events of the twentieth century have shattered the notion that human beings are essentially good. Never has one century seen so many people killed in war or by dictators like Hitler, Stalin, and Pol Pot. Moreover, our social problems have not been solved; instead they have exploded. Despite our technological advances, we face the reality that poverty, racial prejudice, alcohol and drug abuse, greed, and injustice are just as bad, if not worse, at the end of the twentieth century than at the beginning.

And personally, most of us feel the impact of an uncertain world in our daily lives. Death and illness strike close to home. Families are shattered by divorce, immorality, and economic uncertainty. And we struggle with relational issues at home, at work, even at church. We face the stark reality that while we have the technology to send men to the moon, we cannot magically heal broken relationships or automatically bring order out of the chaos that often surrounds our daily lives.

The Olympic spirit and the reality of sin

Yet the myth of human goodness persists. I was reminded of it while watching the opening ceremonies to the 1996 Summer Games in Atlanta. As the big opening night production progressed, the message became clear: If we can somehow catch the Olympic spirit, a spirit that sees the nations of the world as part of one essentially good humanity, then it's a short step toward solving our deepest problems and creating a world of peace and harmony.

I'm not here to bash the Olympics because I enjoy sports and competition. And there is something to the notion that the Olympic Games can foster dialogue between different nations and peoples. But as Christians, we can enjoy watching or participating in the Olympics and still reject the myth of human goodness and progress that the leaders of the Olympic movement seem determined to advance. Our Christian faith offers a much more realistic perspective of humanity, one that the Protestant reformer John Calvin articulated well: "We learn that there is nothing instituted by God, no matter how holy and worthy of praise, that human faults do not either corrupt or make unprofitable. We are amazed that things are never so well arranged in the world that there is not some evil mixed with the good. This is caused by the wickedness and corruption of our nature."

Calvin captured brilliantly what the Bible teaches regarding human sinfulness. The essence of sin is our rebelliousness against God, our desire to live independently of him. That rebellion is reflected in all of life—in our personal lives, in our interpersonal relationships, and in the organization of our society. It's the reason why human beings, acting on their own, cannot solve the

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Kiwis for Christ

The 1996 Short-term Missions Trip by New Zealand Christians to Oro Bible College

Russell Carle
Auckland, New Zealand

MANY OF YOU are probably wondering why I went to the Philippines on a short-term missions trip so soon after arriving in New Zealand. Shortly after arriving here in June '95 I heard that the Conditional Immortality Association was planning a short-term trip to the Philippines and needed help. At the time I thought it would be out of the question for me as we would still be settling in at our new church in Takanini. Due to the hospitality and support of the people at the Takanini Church of Christ, Life and Advent, where we have been assigned, Noelle, the kids, and I have started to feel at home and at ease.

In November, when plans were finalized for 1996 church ministry, I learned that December and January (the summer months in New Zealand) were very slow months at the church. Upon approaching Ernie Schache, Chairman of the Missions Committee, about the trip to the Philippines, he told me that the night before he had received word that Janice Aldridge, one of the team members, was ill and that she and her husband, Grant, who was team-leader, would be unable to go. Ernie said that he had been praying for God to provide needed help for the team. We both considered this providential, as did Noelle, World Mission director Patterson, and the executive board of the Takanini church.

Impressions of Manila

Eleven of us left Auckland late on December 27 as our New Zealand Air 747 had to have some unscheduled maintenance. As a result, two members of our team had their boarding passes sold out from under them by the time we had arrived at Sydney, Australia. They spent one day in Sydney and one day in Guam but finally made it to Cagayan de Oro.

The rest of us made it to Manila, but couldn't find the party at the airport that was to meet us. We did twenty questions and went through everyone's jokes while we waited. We observed security officers carrying machine guns around the airport which didn't make me feel excessively secure. But it was the same everywhere we went and we soon got used to it. While waiting I bought four Cokes. When I asked the vendor how much, she responded tentatively, "100 pesos?" I paid on the spot and found out later that the going price is seven or eight pesos for a Coke. A peso is worth about 7 cents. Oh well, our group had a good laugh about it. But I think they were a little unsure as to whether or not I should be let out on my own.

I think they were a little unsure as to whether or not I should be let out on my own.

After three hours our people found us and took us in a jeepney, a truck with a jeep front end and a ten-foot covered body with benches on each side, to the Christian and Missionary Alliance guest house in Manila. We got showers and a good night's rest.

After breakfast we wandered around the narrow streets of the neighborhood. The houses had high walls with broken glass or barbed wire on the top. Many residents employ full-time armed guards as gate-keepers. Anyone who had anything was serious about hanging on to it. Some parts of Manila have thousands of squatter's shacks built on the edges of rice paddies or rivers. Yet the city is filled with capitalists. Every house was a shop, a fix-it place, a diner, or something.

Working at Oro Bible College

After an uneventful flight to Cagayan de Oro, we were met by Jackie and Warren Prestidge. After a fifteen-minute ride we were at Oro Bible College, our home for the next

three weeks. We took our luggage to the dorms, girls and boys, and claimed bunks. The Kiwis on the team seemed like veteran campers. They were wonderful folk with which to work, live, and pray. The staff of OBC supplied us with a generous Filipino-style supper—lots of rice, and a series of tasty dishes I can't name. One I know had oxtails in it and one was a type of fish soup. They had fruits of all sorts. Generally I am not a fruit eater, so when offered a mango I felt like the noble Christian martyr as I prepared to "eat what was set before me." Imagine my delight and surprise to find a new fruit that I can relish. This increased the number of fruits I consider edible by about twenty-five percent.

The next day we got an early start on our projects. The crews were divided into three parts, those that tiled the men's showers, those who plastered the outside of the men's dorm with cement, and the cooks. I plastered all the time I was there. It was an important task as the blocks the dorm was built with had little concrete and were weathering badly. Also the blocks were laid in an uneven, disjointed manner and gave the building a ramshackle appearance.

After laboring for the Lord for years behind a desk, the effort required to mix cement by hand and smear it on the building was considerable. But it was rewarding to finish each day's labor and see that I had accomplished something for Christ. So I was thankful to be able to make a concrete difference.

The Filipino masons were patient teachers. After I had spent at least an hour trying to get a finish on a two square meter portion of wall, I started to move on when one of the young men named Jojo approached me. "Do you like the way it looks?" he asked with a smile.

"No," I said as I glanced back and forth at him and the wall.

"Why not?" he asked me with another smile.

"Because you don't like the way it looks," was my answer.

Still smiling Jojo took my trowel, and thoroughly wetting the surface again, shortly worked it down to a smooth finish. Keeping it wet was the key, especially when the sun blazed down.

After a while I could get the surface looking right. But I never learned how to get cement on the wall without getting it all over me. You might say it looked like I got right into my work. The real masons looked clean and fresh at the end of the day. I looked like a poorly made statue. I am sure that I brought them great joy, or at least comic relief. At least the dorm will look like an asset to the college instead of a liability.

The tilers enabled the men to use facilities that had been unusable due to the difficulty of keeping concrete clean, and the rotting of doors. There is now three times the shower/toilet space available for the men. But the tilers had a very difficult start as they had never laid tile before. The directions didn't give any of the tricks of the trade that help the tiles actually stay put. Many tiles fell off after the first day, and it was incredibly frustrating. It was all they could do to keep themselves at it the next day, but keep at it they did. After a mason took a day to show them the ropes, the inside work took off. The plastering crew always had to quit at or before dark, due to twilight taking place promptly at 6:00 p.m. The tilers with their electric lights often worked much later.

The bond of Christ's love is stronger than iron and cares nothing about differences of speech, clothing, culture, or color of skin.

A good investment

These were projects the college couldn't take on itself for lack of funds. But I was quite thrilled to see how God had supplied in the Philippines. The New Zealanders have made a long-term difference during their three short-term missions trips to the Philippines. They have made vast improvements to OBC, and a lot of friends in the bargain. Not only have they worked on buildings but have also brought money each time to buy bags of rice for the students, many of whom were fasting on the weekends due to lack of funds. There has been a growing love and respect both ways over the years between Filipinos and Kiwis. Members of our team were talking about the next project and ways to provide long-term help with operating costs at the college.

Another thing I was truly impressed with was the difference OBC has made in the Philippines. It is a wonderful investment of Advent Christian missions dollars. The giving you have done over the years through Penny Crusade has been instrumental in reaching thousands for Christ. There have been as many as fifty pastors, pastoras, and church planters trained at OBC. American and Canadian money works hard in the Philippines for the cause of Christ because first of all it buys so many pesos. Second, it costs so little to live. And lastly because Filipino Christians are willing to work for so little, they have planted a host of churches. Most of the pastors farm to feed their families. They live, walk, and work by faith. Believe me, it is a faith that is attractive not only to their Filipino neighbors but also to me. Their commitment to church planting, evangelism, pastoral training, and following the leading of the Holy Spirit have made this a field of dynamic growth.

Yet growth always comes with a cost. Here many pastors burn out in a short time. Pray for their strength. Give support to their work.

The greatest asset that OBC and the conference have are its people. I found the students intelligent and committed. I found the staff dedicated and inspiring. I found worship at Maranatha Bible Church dynamic. The worship team practices up to four times a week. On Sunday they give

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Gimme That Ole Cafeteria-Style Righteousness

Clayton Blackstone
Lewiston, Idaho

HENRY FORD once quipped, "You can buy a Model T in any color you want—as long as it's black." Ford pioneered mass production but didn't know diddly about marketing during the waning years of Century 20. Choice is in. According to the gospel of Madison Avenue, the Constitution guarantees it as an inalienable right, up there with life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The supermarket brims with options, forcing us to choose between store label and national brand. Warehouse merchandisers compel us to calculate the potential savings of buying in quantity. An ice cream shop offers 31 flavors. The car of our dreams comes in sixteen colors and an endless variety of options. Cafeterias and buffets with their mega-choice offerings entice us to ignore reason while we heap food on a limitless supply of plates.

We prefer a religion that fits God to the contours of individual taste.

And if that's not enough to turn hair gray, almost everybody who is anybody in the church world these days tells us that the community of faith needs to bow at the shrine of consumerism to create an environment which includes John and Mary Unchurched to attend our houses of worship. "Give people choices," they sing in unison. Saturday evening or Sunday multiple services. Contemporary, traditional, and high church worship celebrations. Twelve-step groups. Bible studies for single parents, parents of teens, parents of children who left home and then returned, and parents of dysfunctional parents.

Forgive the sour note. I suppose there's nothing wrong with choice—unless our commitment to it forces us across a line we ought not cross as followers of the Lamb. For instance, a recent poll concluded that while seventy-five percent of Americans say that they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, only thirteen percent believe the Ten Commandments should be a determining factor when making moral choices. We prefer warm feelings to the teaching of Scripture. Because of our devotion to the goddess of choice, we sing "give me that ole cafeteria-style righteousness"—a let's take-what-we-want-and-leave-the-rest-for-others faith. A religion which fits God to the contours of individual taste.

"Put me first" says God

But when our values clash with God's, it's time to learn a new tune. We exist as a gathered community of people confessing Jesus as Lord to "set up in the world a new sign which is radically dissimilar to the world's own manner and which contradicts it in a way which is full of promise," argues Karl Barth.

"The only way for the world to know that it is being redeemed is for the church to point to the Redeemer by being a redeemed people. The way for the world to know that it needs redeeming is for the church to enable the world to strike hard against something which is an alternative to what the world offers.

"Unfortunately, an accommodationist church, so intent on running errands for the world, is giving the world less and less in which to disbelieve. Atheism slips into the church where God really does not matter, as we go about building bigger and better congregations (church administration), confirming people's self-esteem (worship), enabling people to adjust to their anxieties brought on by their materialism (pastoral care), and making Christ a worthy subject for poetic reflection (preaching). At every turn, the church

must ask itself, 'Does it really make any difference, in our life together, in what we do, that in Jesus Christ God is reconciling the world to himself?'"

These prophetic words from Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon force us to ponder the implications of our love affair with choice. Centuries ago, God laid out a series of commandments—four outlining our treatment of him and six focused on our relationship to others. Ten precepts which define a lifestyle that honors God. Ten paradigms given little consideration in a consumer-driven church market which encourages folks to choose a place of worship based on fellowship, programs, music, location, or convenient parking. Ten standards tweaked and massaged by long standing members of the company of the redeemed to quiet a guilty conscience. Not many cruising for a place to worship select their home because of its character as a holy community. Still, it's no reason to abandon our calling.

"Put me first," God says. "Stay away from idols. Don't misuse my name. Set one day apart for me.

"Honor your parents. Don't murder. Don't commit adultery. Don't steal. Don't give false testimony. Don't covet."

Ten commandments. Straightforward and to the point. Then pages of specifics. Instructions about idols and altars, servants, personal injuries, protection of property, social responsibility, justice and mercy, festivals and sabbath laws, offerings, ark, tabernacle, table lampstand, and offering.

Like us, the people of Israel wanted a manual for conduct, something which spelled out a detailed response to every situation. The result? Something we call legalism. The Pharisees, experts at fine-tuning the commandments, produced 613 rules (248 commandments and 365 prohibitions) and bolstered their rules with 1,521 clarifications. To elude sexual temptation they lowered their heads to avoid looking at a woman, earning the title "bleeding Pharisees" because

Living by Faith a la Carte

OVER THE YEARS, I've heard many a sermon on justification by faith. I've even preached a few myself. Those same preachers challenged me to live by faith too. Translated into vocabulary of a struggling college student, faith almost always equaled some form of money. Money for room, board, and tuition. A job to help us make it through. An unexpected check in the mail which provided for an ice cream feast at *Friendly's* when peanut butter and honey had been the main fare at supper. Perhaps they taught more, but I failed to get it.

Living by faith involves making principled choices, trusting in the One who knows the end from the beginning. It means doing right even if the stars fall because we believe that the One who determines right from wrong will cause all things to contribute to our development as reflections of Jesus.

So in case I'm not the only one who failed to get all the implications of the just living by faith the first time around, I offer a few a la carte items to aid your growth.

• Search the Scriptures for the stories of folks who faced similar struggles and temptations. If you battle lust, ponder David's tragic tale of a torrid affair with Bathsheba, including his murderous cover-up, the tragic death of the child, and the consequences on his family. Learn about mastering control issues by musing over the story of Esther, paying close attention to the difference between Haman's scheming and Mordecai's balance between faith and action.

• Listen to the stories of other pilgrims who walk by faith. Men and women years into this thing we call faith offer a wealth of inspiring tales. Truth is, we're into principles. Clear, concise statements which take little time and can be recited from memory. But while principles get into the head, stories get into the heart. Stories inspire. Stories make us believe in a way that moves us to action. Stories put heart and soul into theology. How-to's vary with circumstances, personality, culture. Stories give hope of personal triumph.

• Keep a "grace thus far" journal. Maintain a personal record of evidences of grace which have enabled you to experience victory. And record your reflections on failure. As you look back, what ways of escape do you now see God provided but which you neglected to take? Why did you miss the exit signs? What was your devotional life like prior to the success you experienced?

Our prayer—
for a faith that would not shrink
Though pressed by many a foe,
that will not tremble on the brink of
any earthly woe;
that will not murmur or complain
beneath the chastening rod, but in
the hour of grief or pain will lean
upon its God;
A faith that shines more bright and
clear when tempests rage without,
than when in danger knows no fear,
in darkness feels no doubt.
—William Bathurst

My prayer—that a diet of these spiritual disciplines will produce increased encouragement for you as you daily live by faith. Bon appetite.

—Clayton Blackstone

of frequent collisions with walls and other obstacles. To elude desecration of the Sabbath, they outlawed thirty-nine activities which might be considered work. To avoid misusing the name of the Lord, they refused to write or pronounce it.

Six-hundred-and-thirteen rules and 1,521 amendments to which we've added some of our own. Don't drink, dance, chew, or run around with those who do. Women should always wear dresses. Real Christians don't dance, play only Christian games on Sunday, and avoid all music with a hard, driving rhythm. Well-meaning attempts to further define the original Big Ten and let us off the hook of original intent. And to our well-intentioned attempts Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).

The words stun us. "I didn't come to reduce the mean by abolishing the Law," he argues. "I came to *raise* the standard of righteousness" (Matthew 5:17).

According to Jesus, people who dabble in goodness don't take the life of another. They restrict sexual activity to marriage. They follow the letter of the law when dissolving a marriage. They keep all promises made to the Lord. They don't get even when wronged. They love their neighbors.

Not many cruising for a place to worship select their home because of its character as a holy community. That's no reason to abandon our calling.

But the Kingdom of heaven calls us to an even higher benchmark. For starters, we're called to free ourselves of uncontrolled anger and to consider women as people of worth instead of sex objects (See Matthew 5:21-32). Submitted to the rule of God, folks take their wedding vows seriously, keep their word no matter what the cost, turn the other cheek when wronged, and love their enemies. Children of the Kingdom order their lives by the spirit of the Law instead of its letter.

Christ calls us to think from scratch about social and relational issues. He invites us to tune our ears to the sound of the angelic drummer beating out the Kingdom cadence to which we are called to march. He challenges us not just to think differently about moral hot topics—abortion, pornography, racism, the drug trade—but to think differently continually. Our mission as Christians means becoming God's alternative society—his kingdom. *Our heavenly citizenship requires that we go along with our culture only when we have biblical reasons for doing so.*

Relationships matter

Brennan Manning writes that "Discipleship is not about being right or being perfect or being efficient. It's all about the way (we) live with each other. In every encounter we either give life or we drain it. There is no neutral exchange. We enhance human dignity, or we diminish it. The success or failure of a given day is measured by the quality of our interest and compassion towards those around us. We define ourselves by our response to human need. The question is not how we feel about our neighbor but what we have done for him or her. We reveal our heart in the way we listen to a child, speak to the person who delivers mail, bear an injury, and share our resources with the indigent."

Six commandments from which traditionalists and moderns prefer to pick, choose, or amend. Six commandments we prefer to selectively apply. Six commandments we dish up buffet style. But six commandments Jesus uses to redefine righteousness, helping us understand an intent of the Law: relationships with God and people matter.

I watched in horror as the coach met his point guard at mid-court a second after the halftime buzzer. Normally, I would have been summarizing statistics, or gathering up warm-up jackets and water bottles. But this night I stood mesmerized by the unscheduled halftime entertainment. An irate coach dressed down his star in the finest Bobby Knight tradition. People suspended conversation as his angry voice echoed through the gym.

Twenty-five years later, I still remember feeling deep compassion for the fellow. I've always liked to win. I especially wanted to defeat our downstate nemesis. But I knew that even enemies deserve kinder treatment. And as I relive the memory from my high school years, a memory from a recent yesterday juxtaposes itself beside the one from years gone by.

My daughter wanted to do something special with a friend—a graduation present to herself. A cruise. A trip to Disneyland. Something certain to cost more money than I think she should spend. She wanted to do something Hazel and I can't afford to do. She wanted to spend money she hasn't saved. She wanted to spend money with college just around the corner. She wanted to spend money which she should be saving for car repairs certain to come up soon.

Although I didn't berate her in front of her boss at work or in the aisle at Walmart, my eyes narrowed, my voice went up a few decibels and my words cut every bit as much as that coach's twenty-five years before. In the heat of the moment, I thought the coach wrong while justifying my own response as a natural parental reaction to an impending irresponsible action. I didn't take my daughter's life but my uncontrolled anger took a slice of her spirit. Jesus considers the act every bit as serious as murder because people matter. And because people matter, we'll never find righteousness which exceeds that of the Pharisees and pleases God in a buffet line.

Righteous responses, like salvation, come by faith. As God's people, we must daily live by faith in Jesus Christ. We look at people to whom we

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Church Bell Rings Once Again

FOR THE FIRST TIME in almost a quarter of a century, the bell rang on top of the North Springfield, Vermont, Advent Christian Church. But the occasion was bittersweet. The congregation was overjoyed that the church bell, out of service since 1972 when the old church building was torn down, had been restored and placed in a new belfry. But the man who made it possible, Mr. Allen Glynn, died just days before the project was complete. Mr. Glynn had worked for eighteen months to make restoration of the bell possible as a tribute to his wife, Josephine, who had died in 1991.

For the first time in almost a quarter of a century, the bell rang on top of the church. But the occasion was bittersweet.

The bell was originally purchased by the North Springfield congregation in 1920. The bell was originally cast in Seneca Falls, New York, for the Vermont Liberal Institute in Plymouth Union, Vermont, But when the school closed just after World War I, both the building and the bell were slated for demolition. But George "Pa" Snell, a member of the North Springfield congregation at that time, went to the Institute with his horse and wagon and purchased the bell on behalf of the church. For the next half century residents of North Springfield heard the bell each Sunday morning as time for morning worship approached.

With the completion of the congregation's new sanctuary in 1972, the bell was placed in storage and left there until the church prepared to celebrate its 125th anniversary in 1994. In the words of Pastor Floyd McIntyre, "Someone in the congregation came up with the idea of putting the bell on a float for the Springfield High School Alumni Day parade. We designed a float around the theme, "Ring Out the Message," and placed the bell on the float." But the truck pulling the float would not start and the float missed the parade. But despite that, the parade judges awarded the church first prize for best non-alumni float.

On the Sunday after the parade, the truck was started and the float brought to the front of the church grounds so that the congregation could view it. And once the congregation was seated inside the church building, the bell was rung. That's when the drive started once again to place the bell on top of the church building. According to Pastor McIntyre, "When some of our older parishioners heard the bell again after so many years, they were especially moved. That's when Allen Glynn approached the church trustees and offered to underwrite the entire cost of putting the bell back in service."

"Older members especially said they missed hearing the bell," according to Pat Kenny who provided storage space for the bell for many years. The restoration work was difficult and time-consuming. According to Pastor McIntyre, "When we brought the bell out of storage in 1994, it was painted gold and blue and it looked terrible!" The bell had been painted those colors at the time of the American Bicentennial in 1976. But with several months of work by Theresa Stewart from Chester, Vermont, the bell now looks much like it did when it was originally made.

Two days after Christmas, 1995, the carpenters finished the cupola

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Our Purpose As A Church

Tom Warner
San Diego, Calif.

A SHOE FACTORY exists to make shoes. One factory may have a fancy building and another a common one. They may operate at different hours with more or less workers on various shifts. One might compare them or rate them in a number of ways, but their common purpose is making shoes.

We might compare churches in a number of ways. Church A has a nicer building than Church B. Church C has more parking and a gym. Church D has doubled in attendance in the last year. But, beyond these comparisons, what's the essential purpose of a church? What is the measure of *success* as defined by our Lord?

In November, at a *Growing a Healthy Church* seminar, Dann Spader reminded me of it: Jesus commissioned his church to ". . .make disciples. . ." That's our business, according to Matthew 28:19-20, which goes on to tell us we make disciples by helping people come to the point of commitment to Christ (marked by baptism), and by helping those baptized believers learn to obey him in everything. Winning people to be followers of Jesus can be broken down into three phases: cultivating relationships, sowing seeds of truth, and reaping a commitment to Christ. Let's think about the first part, cultivating relationships.

To make disciples, we must have meaningful contact with people.

To make disciples, we must have meaningful contact with people. (See one example of how Jesus did it in John 4.) Often, we feel we're too busy to take time for cultivating friendships with a neighbor, fellow student, or co-worker who is not yet a follower of Jesus. But, we can change!

Some weeks ago, I finally took time to stop and admire something a neighbor had been building in his driveway. That pleased him. I asked some questions about it, and he opened up to me in a surprising manner. Since then, he's even asked me questions about my faith. And, he's read a book about Jesus which I offered him, called *More Than A Carpenter*.

More recently, I took time to return to a small shop near our church in order to get better acquainted with the Vietnamese man who owns it. After asking about some of his products and purchasing a couple items, I inquired about his experience in Vietnam where he'd lived, before coming to the United States. That led into an interesting conversation about Buddhism and Christianity—one in which I learned much. I didn't "push my faith" on him—though there was opportunity to share a little bit. Basically, I was enjoying making a new friend.

In both cases, I had to temporarily ignore my to-do list which was overflowing with other things. I could have said, "I don't have time for making new friends." But, near the top of God's to-do list for us is "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39). We're commanded to be friendly and care about people around us. If we learn how to do that, it will aid us greatly in making disciples. But, we must see them as valuable in themselves, not merely as "church prospects." Odds are, some of our new friends will eventually want to hear about our faith. God will see to that, as we pray.

Will you join me in making a special effort to make a new friend? Reach out to someone. Find out what they're interested in. Ask questions. Listen well. Smile. Call them by name. Don't push your faith on them. Give them some of your time. Have fun together. Learn to care about their struggles. Pray for them. God may just make you a "stepping stone" for them toward Jesus. ❑

Tom Warner is senior pastor of North Park Community Church (A.C.) in San Diego, Calif. He originally wrote this article for his church newsletter.

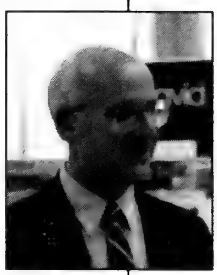
Questions and Answers

with Edward Fudge

Editor's note: With this issue, we begin a new monthly feature written by Edward Fudge. Edward is an attorney living in Houston, Texas, and author of several books including The Fire That Consumes. *If you have a biblical or theological question you would like to ask Edward to respond to, you can send it to the* Advent Christian Witness, *PO Box 23152, Charlotte, NC 28227. Or, if you are on-line, you can send it to Mayerpub@aol.com and we will forward it to him.*

Can we trust in anything for salvation other than Jesus?

It has been said that a question well asked is already half-answered. A recent editorial in a Christian paper queried, "What conditions must one meet to receive grace initially and to continue receiving it?" According to its author, we must believe and obey God to enjoy his grace—although he affirmed that "Christ does not require perfect obedience." I must respectfully disagree with both the question and the answer.



From the Garden of Eden onward, Scripture makes plain that human fellowship with God requires perfect obedience. Equally clear, none of us can bring God such an unblemished life. We all have sinned, and we all continue to fall short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23). And, since the wages of sin is death, every one of us has also forfeited any right to eternal life based on our own performance record (Rom. 6:23).

So how can any sinner be saved? The good news is that God has come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves (Rom. 8:1-4). Jesus came to do the will of God (John 6:38; Heb. 10:5-7). In every thought, word, and deed, Jesus flawlessly exemplified God's righteous character. For the first and only time in earthly history, God saw a human life lived precisely according to his will. On the cross, Jesus offered that life of spotless human obedience to God (Heb. 10:10; Rom. 5:18-19).

When Jesus died, he also received in himself the penalty for sin. To a Jew familiar with God's standards it appeared that Jesus was a terrible sinner—why else was he hanging on that cross! (Isa. 53:4; see 1 Cor. 12:3).

The good news is that Jesus did all this in the place of us sinners. His was the perfect *doing*—by which *we* are made holy (Heb. 10:10). His was the perfect *dying*—by which *our* sins are forgiven (Isa. 53:5-6). The gospel is the story of what God has done for us sinners in Jesus. It is "the good news of your salvation" (Eph. 1:13).

The work that sets us right with God is finished forever (John 19:30; Heb. 9:12, 24-28). We cannot contribute to it or subtract from it. We can only *trust* it, confident that God is faithful and his promises are sure. None who trust in him will ever be embarrassed or disappointed (1 Pet. 2:6; Nahum 1:7).

Whoever truly trusts in Jesus will want to do what he says. That certainly includes being baptized in Jesus' name as a public, visible declaration of the heart—faith that only God can see (Mark 16:15-16; Col. 2:12). It includes observing all else that Jesus has taught, confident of his empowering presence although we do not see him with physical eyes (Matt. 28:19-20). But our obedience will always be imperfect. Even our best efforts will always come up short of God's righteous standards. We can never entrust our salvation to anything *we* have done.

The fact is, Scripture does not encourage us to think of salvation as a commercial transaction (we give God something, in exchange for which he gives us grace), or even as a joint venture (accomplished by the sum of God's part and our part). It is a free gift, wholly the product of God's gracious love and mighty deeds on our behalf.

The better question is not, "What conditions must one meet to receive grace initially and to continue receiving it?" It is rather, "Can we trust anything for salvation other than Jesus?" And, whether we look in the Bible, or look in the mirror, the answer to that question is always a resounding "No!"

A leader of a local church expressed concern that many teenagers appear generally disinterested and are sometimes even disruptive or unruly in church meetings.

Don't be overly discouraged

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VISITING THE HOLY LAND

Nancy Beggs with Jody Reeves

FOR MANY, a visit to the Holy Land is more than an experience in travel and geographic discovery, it's also a spiritual journey. My own opportunity to take this extraordinary trip was an unexpected gift. With feelings of anticipation, I boarded the plane in the early morning hours of January 12, 1996. To visit the land of Jesus' earthly ministry is a privilege and a blessing. Yet during my stay I came to understand that a far more important journey must take place in the heart of every believer.

My feet traced the steps Jesus took as he preached to the crowds in Capernaum. My hands touched the ruins of a synagogue where Jesus may have argued with the Pharisees. My legs carried me up the hill overlooking the Galilean Sea where the familiar Sermon on the Mount was first spoken. My eyes beheld the well, where it is said, Mary gathered with the other mothers of Nazareth to collect water for their households. My body was immersed in the waters of the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized and publicly recognized by his Father. My heart broke as I reflected on the sorrow Jesus must have felt as he wept over Jerusalem. Tears fell as I stood in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus prayed and was then betrayed. The joy of resurrection morning was overwhelming as I gazed on the empty tomb in a peaceful garden setting.

Being in the land where Jesus walked and talked, lived and died and rose again, was a thrill of a lifetime. But I know that he desires far more from us than a tracing of his life with feet and legs, eyes and hands. He asks that we walk in obedience to his will, stand firmly on the truth of his words, cry over a hurting world, and reach out to others with the message of his saving grace.

It is not where Jesus walked that matters so much as what he said. It is not what he saw on this earth that matters so much as his vision for eternity. It is not the air that he breathed that matters so much as the breath of life that he gives. It is not the land that he touched 2000 years ago that matters so much as the hearts he touches today. It is not necessary to travel the globe to know the man they call Jesus. He is ready to meet each one of us right where we are, for love and truth are not bound by time and place.

For many, a visit to the Holy Land is more than an experience in travel and geographic discovery. For me it is an ongoing spiritual journey of reflecting on where Jesus walked and striving to live daily what Jesus taught... a journey that will never end. ❑

Nancy Beggs and her husband Dick direct the ministry of Camp Maranatha, the campground owned and operated by the Advent Christian Conference of Southern California in Idyllwild, Calif. Nancy's daughter Jody Reeves is a freelance writer with articles published in Focus on the Family and Decision.

A Psalm

You saved me, O Lord, from drowning in my sin.

I called upon you, and asked for your forgiveness, and you rescued me.

Your love is greater than the vast universe, and your compassion is immeasurable, like the stars in the sky.

Your warm arms wrap around me, and shelter me from the cold.

My body was unclean and broken on the ground. You picked me up and put me back together.

You are more powerful than the bright, shining sun, and as delicate and gentle as the moon in the dark sky.

You lay your precious hand on my body and cleanse my soul.

When I am unable to walk any further, you carry me.

O beautiful heavenly Father, you are a great God, and I will forever serve you.

Cammie Batson lives in Portsmouth, N.H., and is the daughter of Pastor William Batson and Cindy Batson.

that sense of freedom in worship that only comes with intense rehearsal. The pastor of that church, Fernando Sapangan, is an incredible leader, and one who it would be a privilege to work with on an ongoing basis. He is also the president of the Conference and as such provides a successful role model for churches all over the country. We as Advent Christians might profitably consider him a role model for Western churches.

It was a delight to meet Jackie and Warren Prestidge. Jackie had come over for a month's visit during the school holidays. Their commitment to Christ, shown in their willingness to be apart for so long that Warren might provide much needed administrative leadership and instruction at the school, is moving. Yet they are both quite modest about their sacrifice. They need our prayers. Warren is creative and flexible in his leadership at OBC and has been a genuine help there. He has a peace from God about what he can and cannot do. I also found that they both have a delightful sense of humor. That is a great blessing from God.

I was privileged to get time with Margaret Helms and discover her perspective on why the Philippines has been such a dynamic field. She has a long-term view of God's work there. Pray for her as she enters a new phase of life. While there, I had the privilege of preaching both at the college chapel and at Maranatha Bible Church. The Lord blessed me in both services and I was graciously received. Many told me that I had been an encouragement to them. Praise the Lord! The other members of the team visited churches scattered throughout the area. They had various adventures and blessings during their travel and worship experiences. All were impressed by the commitment of the people.

God at work

The laypeople I worked with while plastering the dorm were eager to share with me how they had come to know Christ, and what he was currently doing in their lives. One man was eager to tell me how Christ had healed his daughter of a brain tumor. His daughter stood smiling at me as he recounted this and his conversion. They also wanted to know how I had been born again. I was thrilled by the honest excitement they have about our God. I was also amazed at what good English skills they had. I think all the bilingual masons that I know reside in the Philippines. I know a lot of American masons, too, as twenty years ago I worked as a mason's tender on a big construction job in Maine. Some of those masons were barely lingual.

I know that many of you prayed for our safety and the Lord's blessing during the trip. Thank you! We were safe

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Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

September

1 Praise God for the commitment of **Jeff and Penny Vann** to serve with Advent Christian missions in the Philippines.

2 Pray that as **Jeff, Penny, and their children** settle in Cagayan de Oro, God will give them strength and wisdom as they adjust to new surroundings.

3 Praise God for the effective administrative ministry that **Warren Prestidge** continues to have at Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

4 Pray that God will give Warren **guidance and discernment** as he oversees the ministry of the college.

5 Praise God for the effective service that **David Vignali** continues to provide to Advent Chritian missions in his several important responsibilities.

6 Pray that God will use the work of Advent Christian pastors and church leaders in the **Philippines** to touch lives with the gospel.

7 Praise God for the successful trip to India and Malaysia that Asia/Pacific Area Director **George Teshera** completed earlier this summer.

8 Pray for World Missions Director **Harold Patterson** as he engages in a busy fall schedule of speaking and ministry.

9 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Russell and Noelle Carle** continue to have with the Takanini Church of Christ, Life and Advent in New Zealand.

10 Pray that Russell and Noelle will see a **rich harvest** of lives reached with the gospel through the congregation's ministry.

11 Praise God for the opportunity that **Marion Damon** and **Barbara White** had to return home from India to attend the General Conference triennial convention in Tampa, Fla.

12 Pray that Marion and Barbara will know **God's strength** as they provide leadership for Advent Christian missions work in India.

13 Praise God for the record-breaking **Penny Crusades** reported by a good number of Advent Christian congregations.

14 Pray that God will supply for the **financial needs** of Advent Christian missions and denominational ministries.

15 Praise God for the good ministry that **Amos Gbaa** continues to have in planting an Advent Christian congregation in Ghana.

16 Pray for Advent Christians and all followers of Christ trapped by the renewed fighting in **Liberia**.

17 Praise God for the opportunities that **Aloysius Okon**, pastor of International Pilgrims Christian Center (A.C.) in Charlotte, had to proclaim the gospel during a series of meetings in Nigeria, his homeland.

18 Pray that God will use Advent Christian congregations in **Nigeria** to reach many in that country with the good news of Christ's love.

19 Praise God for the good beginning that **Johnson and Selva Raju** are making toward establishing an Advent Christian congregation in Montgomery County, Maryland.

20 Pray for Johnson and Selva as they continue to make contacts within the large **Asian Indian community** in the greater Washington, D.C., area.

21 Praise God for the good response that Pastor **Hector Ramirez** is receiving as he works to establish a Hispanic Advent Christian congregation in Arleta, Calif.

22 Pray that God would use Hector to reach many for Christ and to build a **self-supporting congregation** in the months to come.

23 Praise God for the opportunity that Advent Christian missions has had to expand its outreach into the eastern European nation of **Croatia**.

24 Pray for Pastor **Desire Ahola** as he works to establish an Advent Christian congregation near the capital city of Croatia—Zagreb.

25 Praise God for the ongoing work of **Steven and Ann Lay** in their work to plant a new Advent Christian congregation in the Kobe area of Japan.

26 Pray that God will raise up Advent Christian missionaries for work in **India** and **Honduras**.

27 Praise God for several Advent Christian congregations who sent **short-term missions teams** to Mexico and Honduras.

28 Pray for Japan missionary **Karen Rigney** as she continues her language-school training.

29 Praise God for the ministry of **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** in their work with the Advent Christian congregation in El Florido, Mexico.

30 Pray for two couples, **Joel and Omega Garcia** and **Mario and Elena Cortez**, as they establish Advent Christian congregations on the Baja California peninsula of Mexico.

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are physically attracted in faith that our Creator will enable us to see them not as sex objects but as individuals bearing his image. We rejoice in faith at a friend's good fortune instead of coveting her new position. We speak truth without embellishment, free of manipulation, and absent of any intent to make ourselves appear good at the expense of another.

Nourished by memories of the "grace which has brought us safe thus far," we walk in faith. By faith we hold to the promise that we never experience anything unique by way of temptation. By faith, we remind ourselves of the faithfulness of God which never allows us to be tempted beyond our level of endurance. By faith we scout out our options, knowing that because God wants us to continue standing, He's provided an escape route (1 Corinthians 10:13).

C.S. Lewis once wrote that people think of Christian morality as a bargain which God makes with us. Keep the rules and experience reward. Ignore the rules, and watch out for fireworks. And according to the polls, contemporary believers see morality as a buffet line—something from which we can pick and choose.

But Jesus invites us to order the most expensive item on the menu—loving God with our hearts, our minds, and our souls, and our neighbors as ourselves-by faith. Once we chow down on this kind of righteousness, we'll never hanker for cafeteria food again. Bon appetite. ❑

Clayton Blackstone is pastor of the Church of New Hope (A.C.) in Lewiston, Idaho.

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the entire time, so far as we knew. And I think we were an encouragement to a group of fine Christians. I left a little piece of my heart and about ten pounds of fat there. "In everything give thanks."

We received much more than we gave our Filipino brothers and sisters. We could see that God is not limited by lack of resources, that the lost find Christ when evangelism is a way of life, that people lead spiritually rich lives in the midst of grinding poverty, and finally that the bond of Christ's love is stronger than iron and cares nothing about differences of speech, clothing, culture, or color of skin. May the Lord touch others with his love in New Zealand and in North America as he does in the Philippines. ❑

Russell Carle serves as an Advent Christian missionary in New Zealand.

Questions continued from page 11

about the teenagers. As I recall, when I was that age my class "chased off" several Sunday school teachers by just such behavior as you describe. The problem is not new by any means.

The long-term key will be a transformation of church and family spirituality from institution and theoretical doctrine to real-life relationship with a living Lord. It might be good to have a meeting (and especially for parents to say this to their own respective teens) at which the adults tell the kids outright, "We are learning so much about God ourselves—we want you to enjoy that also. It isn't about church, or rules, or mere doctrine, but about Jesus Christ who is alive and who saves us from our sin and gives us peace and his Spirit."

Contemporary Christian music is powerful, if you have ways to bring that before your kids. There are also good videos and other resources. You might wish to check out your local Christian bookstore.

We parents will most influence our children by our own example, and by informal, kind teaching at a practical level. If, when they are hurt, we regularly hug them and say, "Let's ask Jesus to help," then pray together for healing as we apply first-aid or whatever, it will make a lasting impression on young minds. If we confess our own wrongs to them, and admit that we need Jesus' forgiveness also, they will remember it later when they need to be forgiven. Their own life priorities will usually follow closely what they *observe* ours to be—regardless of what we say in words.

If in our decisions, we talk in front of them about "what God wants," "what honors God," and "what the Bible says," they will learn more than all the scolding in the world could teach. And when they observe us forgiving people who wrong us, being patient under trying circumstances, doing good to people who don't "deserve" it, they will never forget what they saw—and they will "hear" us when we teach in words about those very things.

We cannot change the past, but we can use the present to determine the future. It's never too late to start doing all we can to help our young people know and experience God. Each new "today" is all the life we have—and each is a fresh opportunity to enjoy a closer and more open walk with God ourselves as long as he gives us life on this earth.

Godly parenting is not an easy job. But God will enable us to do what he asks of us. We will learn much about parenting from our relationship with God, and much about our relationship with God from our loving and conscientious parenting.

Be patient. Hang in there and don't give up! You are doing more than you know. Sometimes kids can't afford to admit (or show) what they have learned from their parents, but it will usually come out later and make all your labors seem very worthwhile. ❑

Bell continued from page 9

which would shelter the bell and a construction crane lifted the cupola, bell, and new church spire into place. Just two days later, the bell was rung for the first time for Mr. Glynn's funeral. "This was such a fitting tribute to a family who had a lifelong affiliation with our church," in Pastor McIntyre's words. "Now we will use the bell each Sunday morning before services and for special events. And we'll be able to take part in community- wide events where area churches are asked to ring their bells at the same time."

On the first Sunday of May, 1996, the church formally dedicated the bell. It was a beautiful spring day, a far cry from the cold days of early winter, when the bell once again began to ring at North Springfield Advent Christian Church. The congregation marked the dedication with worship, a luncheon, and hanging of a plaque with an engraved sketch of the belfry in the church foyer.

The bell reminds the congregation of how God has blessed them in the past and how he wants to use them in the future. "We still proclaim the soon return of Jesus Christ," according to Pastor McIntyre. "Not only does our church find great hope and comfort in that, but we want others to hear the good news that through Christ, God has made his love and mercy available." ❑

This article compiled from reports supplied by Pastor Floyd McIntyre and the North Springfield, Vt., Advent Christian Church.

Editorial continued from page 3

problems that plague our culture.

Some judge the Christian faith as too pessimistic about human nature. But what the Bible teaches about humanity's sinfulness is demonstrated well by the events of this century that is almost complete. And the good news is this: the story does not end with our sinful condition. God has expressed his grace through Jesus Christ and is in the process of establishing his kingdom. We who follow Jesus can be optimistic, not because of some notion of human progress, but because we know that when Jesus Christ returns to earth, God will complete his work. We'll be part of that multitude of people—red and yellow, black and white—who will stand in front of Jesus and declare in the words of John the Elder, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne" (Rev. 7:10). That will be better than any Olympic moment that I could ever imagine. ❑

Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
891 Queen St. #60
Southington, CT 06489

Marion Damon (March 27)
891 Queen St. #60
Southington, CT 06489

Beryl Joy Hollis (December 16)
39B Belmont Terrace
Milford
North Shore City
NEW ZEALAND

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Warren Prestidge
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Margaret Helms (September 18)
3612 Brief Rd. E.
Monroe, NC 28110

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-794-62-8744

Karen Rigney (June 5)
Sunny Coop Futaba #201
80-1666 Tenjincho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN

New Zealand

Russell and Noelle Carle
(December 30 and December 19)
(Ryan, November 15, 1979)
(Emily, June 23, 1983)
(Peter, August 14, 1991)
11 Rosehill Dr.
Papakura
Auckland 1702
NEW ZEALAND

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
Bududuram Refugee Camp
National Mobilization Program
Box 46
Accra, GHANA

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

Liberia and China
Our pastor in China
(September 30 and October 26)
All correspondence should be channelled through the missions office.

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devasahayam
Beulah Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Mexico

Carlos Quintero
387 W. Poppyfields Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
(818) 791-2447

Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Carlos Quintero

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Vice-president
Harold Patterson; World Missions
Millie Griswold; Resource Development

P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

Russell Giasson; Services
Robert Mayer; Publications
Brent Carpenter; Church Relations

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How important is Christian belief in the second coming of Jesus Christ? Pastor Floyd McIntyre reminds us that the "blessed hope" of the church has always focused on the visible, personal return of Jesus Christ and the subsequent resurrection of the saints.

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Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy**

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WILLIAM MILLER: LESSONS WE CAN LEARN

"HISTORY IS BUNK!" declared Henry Ford during the early decades of this century. With those words, the wealthy automaker caught the predominant American attitude toward history and the study of it. We've always been a nation where the future is considered far more important than the past. Americans have always had a hard time seeing any value to the study of history, especially in terms of how lessons from our past might help us make wise choices today. That's true both in church and society. What we tend to do with the past is romanticize it when what we should be doing is paying close attention to what happened, why it happened, and what we can learn from it.

When we lose sense of the Bible being the written Word of God, we lose any foundation for believing in the return of Jesus Christ.

While working on a research project during the past few months, I've discovered that Advent Christians can learn some valuable lessons from their unique history, especially from the life of William Miller. Fortunately, since the end of World War II two significant developments have occurred in the study of American history. The first fifty years of the United States, the time between 1790 and 1840, has received fresh attention and is now being seen as a pivotal time in American history. (One fascinating aspect of that is the subtle but significant cultural differences that emerged between Canada and the United States.) And William Miller (and the Adventist movement that grew from his ministry) has been the subject of several significant historical studies that have provided a new perspective on his place in and importance to Christianity in North America.

The importance of Scripture

All this has convinced me that Advent Christians need to know more about the man who first proclaimed the soon return of Jesus Christ over 150 years ago. When William Miller committed his life to Jesus Christ, his conversion deeply affected his intellect. Miller had been a Deist (someone who accepted the moral teachings of Christianity while rejecting any notion of miracles or the inspiration of Holy Scripture). But through his conversion, he became convinced not only that the Bible was inspired, but that its various books spoke in a unified way about the plans and purposes of God.

When Miller was challenged by one of his deistic friends to prove that, he undertook his own two-year study of the entire Bible. From those two years, he came away convinced not only that the Bible was fully true, but that its prophecies revealed that Jesus Christ would personally and visibly return to earth, sometime around 1843. And while Miller and many other early Adventists were mistaken about the date, they remind us that what Advent Christians believe about the second coming of Jesus Christ must be based on what the Bible teaches. When we lose sense of the Bible being the written Word of God, we lose any foundation for believing in the return of Jesus Christ.

But there's one more valuable lesson from William Miller, a lesson that I think some Adventists have struggled with. Our belief in the soon return of Jesus Christ must be tied to what the Bible clearly teaches about the good news of the gospel message. And for William Miller, that meant a clear understanding of humanity's sinfulness and of God's grace. "I believe," according to Miller, "that man, being tempted by the enemy of all good, did transgress, and become polluted; from which act, sin entered into the world, and all mankind became naturally sinners, thrust out from the presence of God, and exposed to his just wrath forever." With Martin Luther, John Calvin, and the other Protestant reformers, William Miller believed that all human beings are dramatically affected by sin and its distorting power.

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Healthy Churches:

What Do They Look Like?

David E. Ross
Charlotte, N.C.

THE HOSPITAL hallways were nearly empty, as normal visiting hours for the day had long since ended. But my friend and I sat in a corner of the corridor across from the nursery, just outside the delivery room, and whiled away the nighttime hours in eager conversation. Seated in a couple of idle wheelchairs that had been stored along the wall, we kept our vigil as the hours slipped by.

You see, he and his wife were expecting, and, at any moment, we anticipated the birth of a new child into the world. As friends through college and now in nearby assignments serving our first pastorates, we had experienced many things together over the years. But this night was extra special, as together we waited. Before morning we were rewarded. Beautiful baby Bethany was born. What exhilarating excitement! The wait through the anxious night was worth it all.

A healthy church is made up of people who not only talk about prayer, they practice it!

I've often thought about what we experienced that evening as we waited together for the good word. Anticipation and excitement combined to make the normal, everyday activities of life seem tame, or of secondary importance. This single event consumed us, superseding all awareness of schedules and workday responsibilities. There is something compelling and captivating about a shared genuine sense of *expectancy*. It can truly bring focus to your life.

A spirit of anticipation

Expectancy is also a pervasive attribute in a healthy church. When I think through the various characteristics of a healthy, local congregation of Christian believers, the one attribute that consistently emerges is an infectious spirit of anticipation when they come together. People in healthy churches truly enjoy getting together for worship and praise of their Lord. Church attendance is not merely a routine or an assignment. It's a joy! They don't need to be prodded by the biblical reminder of Hebrews 10:25, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

There are several reasons why people attend the gatherings of a healthy church with a spirit of expectancy. Among these are:

Prayer — A healthy church is permeated by prayer. It is made up of people who not only talk about prayer, they practice it! And their prayers are not only for the sick and those in crisis, but for the spiritual upbuilding of God's people and for the salvation of those lost without Jesus Christ.

Can you imagine what a difference it might make in your own sense of expectancy about the Sunday morn-

ing service in your church if you disciplined yourself toward prayerful personal preparation? This might even involve "sacrificing" a few Saturday night television shows or other activities, even intentionally getting a good night's rest in order to assure that you would be alert to what God had to say through his Word on Sunday morning. To merely attend (perhaps a bit late) a worship service for which we have not personally and prayerfully prepared ourselves betrays a woeful lack of expectancy! There was good practical reason for the old covenant Hebrew Sabbath observance to begin at sundown the previous evening. It takes time and discipline to prepare our hearts for God.

Relationships are the lifeblood of any healthy church.

And what about our corporate prayer times as a church? In a healthy church, the sick will certainly be prayed for, but they will not be the predominant prayer concern. After all, these physical bodies are merely temporary "tents" for our living (to use one of the Apostle Paul's terms), but there are greater concerns of eternal consequence—our spiritual development and the salvation of the lost. Great Commission matters dominate the prayer life of a healthy church.

Love — Relationships are the lifeblood of any healthy church. Jesus' instruction on this topic is simple to state, "Love one another even as I have loved you." Easy to say, but humanly impossible to do! Remember, if the standard for our loving one another is measured by his totally self-sacrificing love for us, then that is an awesome assignment! It is certainly not going to "just happen" naturally, because that type of love is not at all human nature. Quite the opposite! The kind of relationships that are at the heart of a healthy church, that are the bridge to a lost world, are *intentional*, not accidental. Building such relationships becomes a priority for healthy Christians. This involves cultivating a relationship with God, our source of love, then extending that discipline to cultivating caring relationships with others. It will cost you, both in terms of time and pride. But it represents the most important investment you can make, one which will yield *eternal* dividends.

Such love among Christians was an important characteristic of the vibrant, growing church of Acts 2. And Jesus stated that such oneness of mind and spirit among believers was what brings real credibility to our gospel witness (see John 17:21-23). The world will know it is a miracle when they see us lay aside our differences of opinion and pull together for an all-important cause!

Scripture — The healthiest churches I know place the Word of God as central to their teaching and fellowship. The Bible is the point of reference for everything that they say and do. Just as these people eagerly anticipate coming together because they truly love and enjoy one another, they also know that they can expect sound teaching of God's Word as a staple of each gathering. This brings substance and absolute truth to their individual and corporate lives, not merely the subjective opinions and platitudes of men.

In a healthy church people are not so preoccupied with having their own needs met as with serving the real, eternal needs of others.

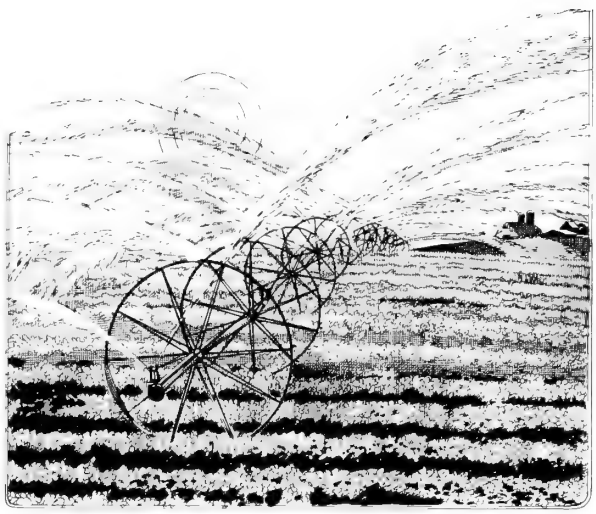
Make no mistake about it, this requires discipline both on the part of the preacher/teacher and of the hearer. Advance preparation (as spoken of earlier) and note-taking are not often natural tendencies, but are commonly practiced in healthy churches. Biblical truth is intended not only to stimulate our thinking, but is to be put into practice and, in fact, retaught to others by the hearers! The Great Commission instructs us to make disciples by "teaching them how to obey (put into practice, or *live*) all that [Jesus] commanded us" (Matthew 28:20). Healthy churches are serious about making disciples. Therefore, they are serious about learning, living, and teaching God's Word.

Vision — Perhaps more subtle than some of the other characteristics of a healthy church, but no less important, is a sense of who they are and where they are going. A mission statement is sort of like a job description, in that it defines what we hope to accomplish and how. That is good. But until such a definition of our ministry is known and owned by the rank and file of the congregation, it is fairly impotent. In a healthy church the leadership is always finding effective ways to keep the vision of where they are headed and what they are planning, by God's grace, to accomplish before the eyes of the people. Believe me, this can clarify purpose, bring meaning to otherwise "routine" activity, and generate a wonderful spirit of expectancy.

I believe that effective, gripping vision is a result of having been with Jesus (i.e., conscious dynamic worship) and of having been reminded of his agenda and his passion. For he truly came among us as a servant. In a healthy church people are not so preoccupied with having their own needs met as with serving the real, eternal needs of others.

Advent Christians have been from the beginning a people who expressed their sense of expectancy, "while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ!" (Titus 2:13). Thank God that a renewed and constant state of *expectancy* is characterizing more and more of our local congregations today! Do you have the will and commitment to assure that your congregation will be one of these? Only in such a way can the body of Christ be healthy and effective. ❑

David Ross served eighteen years as pastor of State Road Advent Christian Churdh in Presque Isle, Maine, before becoming Executive Director of the Advent Christian General Conference in 1991.



Seeds of Revival

Dann Spader and Cheryl Ewings
Elburn, Ill.

I HAVE A mental picture that I've carried with me for many years. As I've prayed, waiting for a spiritual awakening to come upon our country, I've imagined revival would start with a spark in one young person. They probably live in a rural, out-of-the-way town, yet they are down on their knees in brokenness, weeping before the Lord. This one young person would ignite a flame that could engulf our country with a passion for God that has never been seen before.

Our society stands at a precipice of spiritual decline or spiritual awakening. The key to our future is our youth. With their fresh approach to ministry, empowered by the Holy Spirit, they have the potential to revolutionize our world. In all five of the major spiritual awakenings experienced in our country, young people played a significant part in every aspect of renewal. Yet, why should we desire such a revival? Why is it something that I pray for regularly? Can you picture every Christian young person in Canada and the United States being like-minded, intent on bringing God's Kingdom about within their generation? Add to that the transforming power of the Holy Spirit and it will unleash an incredible transformation across the country.

With all that is happening in our youth culture today, I am more than ever convinced that we are on the verge of a revival the world has never seen the likes of before.

To live again

Revival literally means to "live again," or as Richard Owen Roberts described it, "revival is an extraordinary movement of the Holy Spirit producing extraordinary results." There is no way human effort could accomplish what a revival can in a culture or a nation. American historian, William McLaughlin said, "Revivals alter the lives of individuals; awakenings alter the worldview of a whole people or culture." No one person can change a culture, but God, through his power and movement can! Ron Hutchcraft, recently quoted in *Moody Monthly*, said, "God is clearly building a Spirit movement. . . There is no recent precedent for this level of evangelistic cooperation, committed prayer, focus on the lost and Christian student initiative."

The traditional church of America has miserably failed to reach the young people of this nation. A denominational leader recently shared with me that not only have their churches stopped growing, but only 20% of their teenagers are returning to church as adults. This is affirmed by a recent *Barna Report* on the church in America that showed that 60% of 60-year-olds attend church on a regular basis, while only 20% of 20-year-olds attend with any regularity.

The spark for the first global awakening, the "Welsh Revival" of 1904-1905, was begun almost twelve years previously when two million young people began to pray for revival. They were operating under the banner of *Christian Endeavor* and their prayer for two years was that revival would come. All across the country there are similar movements of prayer, personal holiness, and increased events of young people sharing Jesus Christ with their friends. The evidences of these signs tell me that there is a revival in the making.

Signs of revival

I see some definite signs that youth events are showing these signals of revival, without any orchestration by a ministry or one group. For example, the *See You at the Pole* prayer movement recently had two million teens meeting at the flag poles at their schools to pray specifically for revival on their campuses. These youth activists, undaunted by stares, even the presence of law-enforcement officers

and school administrators, stood strong to let their faith shine forth. This movement was started by a small youth group in Texas that had a vision for Jesus Christ to reach others on their campus. From that small beginning just a few years ago, this event has burgeoned in numbers ever since. There have even been global *See You at the Pole* efforts who have met in such far-flung places as Moscow.

A second youth movement currently spreading the country reflecting personal holiness is the *True Love Waits* campaign. In a free-sex culture, it is amazing that over 200,000 teens recently signed commitments to remain sexually pure until marriage. They left those covenant cards on the mall in Washington in the summer of 1995 as a symbol of their commitment. The recent publication *Spirit of Revival* noted, "Every outpouring of the Spirit is preceded by earnest, agonizing intercession, accompanied by a heart-brokenness and humiliation before God. Revival always begins a desire for personal holiness and cleansing and I see that beginning with this holiness movement."

A third sign of revival is an increase in desire of young people to share their faith with peers. This vision caught fire in the hearts of fifty denominations and para-church ministries who met to plan the *See You at the Party* strategy. In 1992 and 1993, Josh McDowell and Sonlife Ministries co-sponsored *See You at the Party*, a North American witnessing event which was broadcast via satellite into such diverse places as Yellow Knife Territory in Canada and Puerto Rico with all points in between being blanketed with the good news of Jesus Christ. Eight weeks prior to this event teens were trained in how to effectively share their faith and then held concerts of prayer for their friends that they would invite to a pizza party. This witnessing event, until now the largest ever, had over 1.5 million teenagers participating. There are conser-

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At the Brink

Dann Spader
Elburn, Ill.

MANY TODAY sense we are on the verge of a great spiritual awakening. J. Edwin Orr, acknowledged authority on revivals, said, "Spiritual awakening does not come like a lightning bolt out of the blue—normally a decade or so of preparation precedes a major national revival."

Last year, David Mains cited six signs in the church today as evidence that we are in just such a prelude period: A deep desire for worship; a great prayer movement spreading; strong preaching; a resurgence of service ministries; personal rededication preceding public outreach; and a high level of commitment among young people.

Are we on the verge of an awakening? If so, as youth leaders we ask, "what role have young people had in spiritual awakenings?" Perhaps a backward glance over the first five spiritual awakenings in America will give us an insight to where we stand, and what we can expect.

The First Great Awakening

The First Great Awakening occurred in the American colonies in the late 1730-40s. It was preceded by the preaching of Samuel Stoddard—a puritan pastor in Northampton, Mass., who for 60 years insisted that spiritual awakening was the only answer to the problems of his day. His preaching impacted his young grandson, Jonathan Edwards. At 17, Edwards graduated from Yale. In a few years he became the pastor of the Northampton Congregational Church. When in 1734-35 revival broke out, Jonathan Edwards became one of three young leaders of this First Great Awakening. Witnesses observed, "The town seemed so full of the presence of God; it had never been so full of love, nor joy, and yet so full of distress."

A second leader was a young man named George Whitefield. A man with extraordinary speaking abilities, Whitefield wanted to be an actor. Converted during the First Awakening at age 21, he turned to preaching at 25. Nicknamed the "traveling lightning rod," Whitefield's voice, according to Benjamin Franklin, could be heard by a crowd of 30,000 people! Whitefield perpetuated the awakening period through the 1760s. So well known was he that before George Washington, George Whitefield was the most popular figure in America.

A third young leader was William Tennant. He understood the importance of reaching young people, and began training Christian evangelists in "log cabins." These "log cabin" meetings spread, becoming the catalyst for new schools, including Princeton, Rutgers, University of Pennsylvania, Brown University, and Dartmouth College. Six colonial colleges were born during this First Great Awakening, and young people were prepared for the awakening next to come.

The Second Great Awakening

The Second Great Awakening lasted over 40 years, from the mid-

continued on next page

1790s until 1840. It changed the moral fiber of this country. Young people were instrumental in that period as well. In the middle colonies, a teenager named Francis Asbury came to Christ and began preaching across the country. Self-disciplined, he started each day at 4:00 a.m.; taught himself Greek, Hebrew, and Latin; and read 100 pages of good literature daily! He preached over 16,000 sermons, ordained 4,000 preachers, and traveled 270,000 miles on horseback, wearing out six horses in the process.

In the south and west, James McGready was a fearless preacher whose claim to fame was that he was so ugly, people were drawn to him to see what he had to say. McGready reached two creative young people named Barton Stone and William McGee whom later God used to start the famous "camp-meetings."

Out of this Second Great Awakening came the Young People's Missionary Societies in the early 1800s; the Sunday school movement in 1824; the "singing schools," and the youthful "Cadets of Temperance."

Samuel Mills accepted Christ at age 17. He spent Wednesdays and Saturdays in prayer. In 1806, as a Williams College student, he was part of the haystack prayer meeting. That prayer emphasis grew to become the Student Volunteer Movement which eventually sent 40,000 into worldwide missions in "The Great Century of Christian Advancement."

Eight major benevolent organizations started during this time, including the American Bible Society, the American Board for Foreign Missions, the Sunday School Union, the Temperance Movement, Home Missions Society, and more. The combined budgets of these movements were the equivalent of $175,000,000, which rivaled the federal budget at that time.

The Third Great Awakening

The Third Great Awakening in America came during 1857-59. It was strictly a lay-led movement of prayer. Preceding this awakening, the nation was divided, heading toward civil war. In this prologue period, the YMCA and YWCA were established to help young people reach their peers for Christ in a relaxed environment. In the words of Mark Sentor, "Young men and women in the YMCA and YWCA became leaders for a revival which swept across America."

"God is clearly building a Spirit movement. . . There is no recent precedent for this level of evangelistic cooperation, committed prayer, focus on the lost and Christian student initiative."
—Ron Hutchcraft

On Sept. 23, 1857, Jeremiah Lanphier, at the urging of a YMCA member, gave an invitation for prayer. Six came the first week, followed by 20, then 40. Then they started daily meetings. In six months there were 10,000 gathering daily in New York. And from there it spread across the country: 2,000 in Cleveland and all the churches of St. Louis were filled. In Chicago the Metropolitan Theater was packed. According to J. Edwin Orr, "The influence of the awakening was felt everywhere in the nation. It affected all classes without respect to condition. The number of conversions reported soon reached 50,000 weekly. Within two years, a million converts had been added to the church of America." This Third Awakening clearly was a factor of young people applying actions to their faith and prayers.

The Fourth Great Awakening

The Fourth Great Awakening was global. Commonly called the "Welsh Revival," it occurred during 1904-1905. Francis Clark stumbled on the idea of demonstrating his young people's abilities toward spiritual growth and accountability. That day *Christian Endeavor* began as the forerunner to today's youth ministries. Youth commitment to Christian disciplines multiplied quickly. Within 14 years there were 40,000 Endeavor Clubs involving 2,000,000 young people. The purpose of *Christian Endeavor* focused on sustaining a spiritual awakening among young people.

In 1902, while *Christian Endeavor* was at its peak, a Welshman named Seth Joshua was deeply concerned about the coldness of heart in many churches. He began to pray that God would "raise up a lad from the coal mines or fields of Wales to revive his work." Then in 1904, another pastor was concerned about his young people. In a young people's prayer meeting, a newly converted young girl said, "I love Jesus Christ with all my heart." Her simple comment impressed the group, and a revival broke out. From the meetings that followed, a young man named Evan Roberts was raised up by God. He prayed, "Lord bend me." Then he told his friend, "I have a vision of all Wales being lifted up to heaven. We are going to see the mightiest revival that Wales has ever seen. I believe God is going to draw 100,000 souls to himself." Within a few weeks, revival broke out as Roberts spoke at a prayer meeting. Within a year, 100,000 had indeed come to Christ. Taverns were closed. Immorality was cut in half. Business prospered as people paid back what they had stolen. And this revival spread around the world. There is no doubt that young people were a key catalyst to this awakening.

The Fifth Great Awakening

The Fifth Great Awakening was perhaps more of a stirring—the period of youth rally development from 1935-1967. During this period around and after World War II, ministries such as Youth for Christ, Young Life, Word of Life, Hi-C's, and King's College began. In 1949, *The Minneapolis*

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The Return of Christ

its relevance to the modern church and its place in contemporary preaching

Floyd McIntyre
N. Springfield, Vt.

IN A LITTLE over three years, we will experience the turning of a millennium. To witness the turning of a century is one thing but to live to witness the turning of a millennium is quite another. Already computer experts are struggling with a potential problem with the complicated workings of these marvelous tools of our time. It seems that a problem of major proportions has arisen relative to the internal calendars. The problem is that when the year 2000 comes and the two-digit calendars change the year from 99 to 00, most computer systems will go awry. According to an article in a recent *Boston Globe*, the Gartner Group, a Connecticut-based consulting firm, has estimated that fixing the problem in all the world's computer systems could cost as much as six hundred billion dollars. Will it be the end? Can you imagine what would happen in our world, which is almost totally dependent on computer systems and technology, if on January 1, 2000 all computer systems worldwide shut down? Although this seems to have baffled the experts at this point in time, no doubt they will have found a solution by the time 2000 rolls around.

Many people are looking for something significant to happen when the year 2000 arrives. In 1995, InterVarsity Press released a book by C. Marvin Pate and Calvin B. Haines Jr. entitled *Doomsday Delusions: What's Wrong With Predictions About the End of the World?* Pate and Haines tackle the problem of "doomsday predictions" and use the 19th-century Millerites as a case study of prophetic predictions that did not come to pass. From the back cover of the book we read; "Doomsday prophecy is on the rise. With the year 2000 upon us, we hear more and more predictions of the end—whether from well-meaning Bible believers or from self-appointed cult leaders."

Not the first time

This is not the first time the world has faced the turning of a millennium with resulting in doomsday hysteria. Pate and Haines cite a work by Russell Chandler regarding an event occurring on New Year's Eve AD 999 when

Pope Sylvester II celebrated what many thought would be the last midnight mass ever.

"This was the final hour, the beginning of the day of wrath, the 'nightfall of the universe,' that fateful and dreaded eve of the turn of the millennium, when the earth would dissolve into ashes.

"Outside, anxious crowds flooded the streets. Church bells rang out what most thought would not be a new year but history's finale. And in Jerusalem, thousands of pilgrims milled about hysterically, flocking to the spot where they expected Jesus to descend from the clouds. They, too, were waiting for the End.

"All across Europe people had donated land, homes, and goods to the poor in acts of contrition. Debts had been canceled, infidelities confessed, wrongdoings forgiven. Business had been neglected, buildings allowed to fall into disrepair or even torn down, and fields left uncultivated. Many had freed farm animals and slaves to prepare for the Final Judgment. Beggars had been fed, prisoners released, and churches besieged by crowds seeking absolution. By December flagellants roamed the countryside, whipping one another in penitence and mortification. And at Christmas tide, shops had given away food while merchants took no payment.

"On New Year's Eve, as the fatal hour was about to strike in venerable St. Peter's, Pope Sylvester II raised his hands skyward. The crowd—many dressed in sackcloth and ashes—remained transfixed, scarcely daring to breathe. As one account has it, the giant clock ticking away the last minutes of the first millennium suddenly stopped. Not a few died from fright, giving up their ghosts then and there. But after an awful moment that seemed like eternity suspended, the clock resumed its countdown. Only the ominous tick, tock and the voice of the pope broke the deathly silence. Sylvester chanted the sacred Latin phrases, and at precisely midnight the bells atop the great tower began to peal wildly.

"The *Te Deum* was sung. And no fire fell from heaven" (Pate and Haines, 20).

It's quite unlikely that any such expectation and hysteria like that of AD 999 will manifest itself in December 1999 because our age seems too sophisticated for that. Or is it? Again Pate and Haines provide an interesting analysis of popular classical dispensationalism.

"Classical dispensationalism, the tradition out of which many doomsdayers seem to come, has, in our opinion, mistakenly assumed the "postponed kingdom" theory. This theory states that, with the Jews' rejection of Jesus, the kingdom of God was placed on hold, awaiting the arrival of the last days for its appearance on earth. The unfortunate result of this erroneous perception is that classical dispensationalists, using *pesher* hermeneutics, go on to argue that the last days only recently began, with the reconstitution of Israel as a nation in 1948. In other words, we are now living in the last generation (see Mark 13:30, according to their interpretation). Sadly, however, reading the New Testament this way has led many classical dispensationalists to absolutize this present generation and, inevitably, has locked them into the year AD 2000 for the date of Christ's return" (Pate and Haines, 35).

Hope, not hysteria

So, what does all of this mean to Advent Christians who trace their origins to a movement which focused on the biblical theme of the imminent return of Christ? Perhaps the stage is being set once again for a serious examination of the biblical teaching regarding the Lord's return without irresponsible predictions. The result of that could be genuine hope rather than hype and hysteria.

Eschatology (the study of final things) has always been of more than casual interest to Advent Christians. The biblical teachings regarding what happens to people when they die (cosmic eschatology) have defined who Advent Christians are. A careful analysis of history and theology pushed through the filter of divine revelation has brought about an uncompromising and biblically-based doctrinal position.

The Bible, the New Testament in particular, clearly teaches that there will be an end to life on earth as we know it. The end of all things is predicted as occurring simultaneously with the return of Jesus Christ to the Earth at the time appointed by and known only to God the Father. On this point almost all Bible-believing Christians agree.

Although Advent Christians might see themselves as heirs to a movement that led the way in restoring a biblically-based doctrine to the church, it does not mean that their unique offering to the body of Christ is complete. The doctrine of the return

John Calvin

on the Return of Christ

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief." This has been added so that the faithful might always be alert and not count on it that tomorrow will come. All of us labor under two different evils—too great haste, and laziness. We are impatient for the day of Christ to come, but at the same time we regard it as far in the future. Just as the apostle has previously reprimanded an unreasonable zeal, so now he urges us to shake of our sleepiness, so that we may expect the coming of Christ at any time. Otherwise we would become idle and careless, as so often happens. Why is it that we indulge our bodily desires except that we are not thinking about how near the coming of Christ may be?

From *A Calvin Reader: Reflections on Living.* Selected and edited by William E. Keesecker. (Westminster Press, 1985).

John Stott

on the Return of Christ

On that day every knee will bow to him and every tongue confess him Lord. The devil will be thrown into the lake of fire, where death and Hades will join him. For the last enemy to be destroyed is death. Then, when all evil dominion, authority and power have been destroyed, the Son will hand over the kingdom to the Father, and he will be all in all.

From *The Cross of Christ* by John R. W. Stott (InterVarsity Press, 1986).

of Christ takes on specific importance when all the other pieces of Advent Christian doctrine are put into place. With all the confusion arising out of doomsday hysteria and popular New Age ideas, the need for clear biblical teaching has never been greater. A clearly presented biblically-based teaching on the nature of humanity, on what happens to people when they die and what, if any, hope there is for life after death is desperately needed. Advent Christians have historically provided answers to questions arising out of discussions on these subjects. Now is definitely not the time to abandon these doctrinal distinctives in our preaching or downplay them in regards to their importance in basic Bible doctrine.

The "blessed hope" of the church has always been the return of Jesus Christ and subsequent resurrection of the saints. It still is even though some have confused the issue by teaching the natural immortality of the soul thus leading to a platonic rather than a biblical view of humanity. Such doctrines as these cancel any need for a future bodily resurrection of the saints, one of the fundamental reasons for Jesus' return. It comes as a surprise to some to discover that notable scholars agree with doctrines historically espoused by Advent Christians. Dr. Arthur Holmes, professor of philosophy and department chair at Wheaton College, is a case in point. In the May 1993 issue of *Perspectives*, a publication of the Christian College Coalition, Dr. Holmes writes:

"Or take the idea of soul. We tend to use the word, not in its biblical sense, but in Plato's or Descartes' way. They regarded soul as an immaterial entity somehow inside us, so that we're made up of a physical entity, the body, and an immaterial entity, the soul. This may indeed be the case, but the Bible does not put it that way. The Bible uses the word *soul* of animals, too. In Genesis we read that God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life and he became a 'living soul.' But that same Hebrew phrase is translated a few verses earlier as 'living beast.' We use the word like Plato and Descartes did, because we believe in life after death. Yet the Bible says little about that: its hope is not a disembodied soul, but the resurrection of the body to a life everlasting. *Soul* in the Bible should not be equated with *soul* in Greek philosophy."

Statements such as this from a contemporary Christian scholar should not come as such a surprise. After all, this understanding of biblical doctrine has always been present in the church. For example, on the issue of the intermediate state, Roland H. Bainton, most famous for his work *Here I Stand: The Life of Martin Luther*, makes the following observation in regard to the ancient catacombs in his *The Church of Our Fathers*:

"The earliest pictures by the Christians show their beliefs. Many of these pictures are found in the catacombs, underground passages only three feet wide, winding in a maze beneath the surface of the outskirts of Rome. The catacombs were the cemeteries of the Christians. The word *catacomb* means 'a place of sleeping underground' and the word *cemetery* also means 'a sleeping place,' because the Christians believed that death is only a sleep" (Bainton, 16).

It ought to be of great concern to us when we realize that a whole generation has grown up quite ignorant of these biblical truths! It appears that a generation of teaching has ignored the significance of these things only to reap a harvest of theologically uninformed young people. It ought to come as a "wake up call" to us when we learn that teachers in our churches and youth camps teach doctrines contrary to those of the Bible and most commonly believed by Advent Christians. On the other hand, it's encouraging to discover the number of Advent Christian college students who have been interacting with each other on the Internet as they wrestle with these subjects in theological environments not always respectful of their views. It is quite evident from talking with some that their quest is being realized and their appetite for solid biblical teaching on these subjects is being satisfied.

This article was supposed to address the issue of the return of Jesus Christ, its importance in Adventism,

William Miller

on the Return of Christ

I was then satisfied, as I saw conclusive evidence to prove the advent personal and pre-millennial, that all the events for which the church look to be fulfilled before the advent must be subsequent to it; and that unless there were other unfulfilled prophecies, the advent of the Lord, instead of being looked for only in the distant future, might be a continually-expected event. And finding all the signs of the times, and the present condition of the world, to compare harmoniously with the prophetic descriptions of the last days, I was compelled to believe that this world had about reached the limits of the period alloted for its continuance. As I regarded the evidence, I could arrive at no other conclusion.

Quoted from *A Brief History of William Miller* (Advent Christian Publication Society, 1895).

and its importance for believers today. It is clear that the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is to return to this earth. It is also clear that any hope Christians might have regarding the future depends on this event. Since the blessed hope of the church is in fact a hope in the resurrection, which is contingent upon the Lord's return, it is vital that the teaching not be lost due to New Age or Platonic contamination. Advent Christians, by their very identity, carry the torch illuminating these important doctrines which revolve around the central truth of the Lord's promised coming.

Before we bring our thoughts to an end, something should be said about the importance of this doctrinal position as it relates to disciplemaking, a major emphasis in the Advent Christian Church today. Anyone with even a limited knowledge of the historical Millerite movement will be aware of the evangelistic thrust of the message. Early Adventists believed that Jesus was coming again, that it would be soon, and therefore the message of salvation needed to be proclaimed before time ran out. If this was true in the mid-nineteenth century it is certainly true today. It seems that, in light of the urgency of the message, God can use, perhaps as never before, the Advent Christian Church as an instrument of harvest to bring in his elect from the four corners of the earth. Jesus is coming soon! Therefore, what greater motivation for disciplemaking can there be than this? It is worthy of note that in the words of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:20, Jesus said that disciplemaking would go on "until the very end of the age." So be it, whether the year 2000 has any eschatological significance or not. ❑

A graduate of Berkshire Christian College, Floyd McIntyre is pastor of the Advent Christian Church in N. Springfield, Vermont.

Editorial

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The gospel is good news

And Miller shared with the Reformers a passion to see women and men find forgiveness and hope through Jesus Christ. Again, in Miller's words, "I believe that Jesus Christ is an offering of God to sinners for their redemption from sin, and that those who believe in his name may take him by faith, go to God, and find mercy; and that such will in no wise be rejected." In other words, apart from God's grace expressed through Jesus Christ, the second coming of Jesus Christ offers little hope. When he challenged people with the question, "Are you prepared for the Lord's coming?" Miller knew that the only people who could respond positively were people who had placed their trust in Jesus.

The gospel that William Miller proclaimed is the same gospel we find throughout the pages of the New Testament. It's the same gospel that Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley and others have discovered on those very pages. And it's the same message that Jesus himself challenges us to proclaim—that while we were condemned to death by our sin, we can find God's mercy and grace only through faith in Jesus Christ.

Advent Christians today can be faithful to the legacy that William Miller has left if we remember two important lessons from his ministry. First, the clear teaching of Holy Scripture must always be our source for what we believe about Christian faith. For example, we believe what we do about the return of Jesus Christ and the mortality of human beings because we're convinced that the Bible clearly teaches those ideas. But second, Miller reminds us that our belief in the soon return of Jesus Christ must lead us to boldly proclaim the grace of God. When people find Jesus, they are delivered from death to life. ❑

Seeds of Revival

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vative estimates that over 88,000 teens made first-time commitments to Jesus Christ on that one night! The beauty of this is that they were invited by their Christian friends who were trained and ready to ground them in their faith. There are new events scheduled in 1996, such as the *48 Hours* witnessing event which is a whole weekend set aside to prioritized teens reaching teens for Christ.

On the verge of revival?

With all that is happening in our youth culture today, I am more than ever convinced that we are on the verge of a revival the world has never seen the likes of before. When we enter the new millennium, America will have two million more teenagers than we had at the beginning of 1991. This tells me the next generation can have incredible impact upon the culture we live in. Years ago, President Harry Truman said, "Many times during the past decade the conviction has come to me with increasing force that a revival of the spirit of old-fashioned religion is what the world needs." That need hasn't changed for the teenagers of today. This encourages me to give my life to influencing teenagers to commit their lives to Jesus Christ. They can then go and reach their friends for Christ and so on. I for one want to be praying daily, preparing constantly and personally ready for involvement in the greatest awakening ever seen. ❑

Dann Spader is director of Sonlife ministries and co-author of *Growing a Healthy Church.*

Questions and Answers

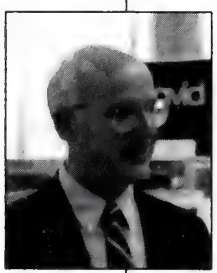
with Edward Fudge

Edward Fudge

Can you give me any insight into the doctrine of "once saved, always saved," and how its advocates handle the passages that seem to teach otherwise?

Although flagrant distortions and abuses of this doctrine abound, one classical contribution of the Reformation was a recovery of the New Testament assurance (firmly grounded in the words of Jesus himself in many texts, especially in John) that those who truly trust in Jesus may know they are securely in God's care and keeping, so that no person, circumstance, or unforeseen set of events can ever snatch them away to destruction.

One old radio preacher used to say, "Beloved, the Bible teaches the security of the believer, but it doesn't teach the security of the make-believer!"



The popular doctrine of "once-saved-always-saved" is sometimes presented in an unbiblical fashion, not when it affirms that the believer is "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed at the last time," an affirmation which comes on good authority; but when (in perverted form of the original reformation doctrine) it says that whoever once makes a profession of faith and prays the "sinner's prayer" can never be lost, no matter how ungodly or unbelieving that one may appear to become.

One reason we find this doctrine so difficult is that we have traditionally tended to think of salvation as coming through something we do—which leaves no room for security or assurance if we are honest with ourselves—instead of seeing that God takes the initiative throughout the process from first to last, and that he is the one who will bring to completion what he has started.

The better we understand that Christ has fully accomplished the work which sets us right with God and that he did it as our representative and in our stead—so that all we can do is trust, receive, and gratefully respond in obedience, service, and praise—the more clearly we will see that our salvation is perfectly secure in him, and will thus enjoy the assurance which that knowledge brings.

"Security" is an objective reality. "Assurance" is the subjective result of knowing about it. People joined to Christ by faith are secure whether they know that fact or not. But they will feel a lot better about it if they know it! The good news is that the more we look at Jesus, and focus on what he has accomplished, and learn of the perfection of his saving work outside of us but for us, the greater our assurance will be.

Someone recently said, "Of course, salvation is by grace and not by works. However, the New Testament also teaches that obedience is a condition for salvation."

You're correct in supposing that God requires human obedience, and that the salvation of sinners calls for a very significant work along that line. The bad news is that fellowship with God based on our performance requires a perfect record, since even one sin, unatoned, separates us from the holy God (Gal. 3:10; Jas. 2:10).

The "good news" of the gospel is that God himself has provided what he requires along this line, in the faithful, bodily life of Jesus of Nazareth almost 2,000 years ago. When we know that, we may be confident that we are both saved and set right with God by human obedience, for "through the obedience of the One, the many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19).

In that light, we have not stressed the necessity of obedience enough, for we have often made it sound as if our own obedience—which is always partial, flawed, and imperfect—is somehow capable of setting us right with God, or at least of contributing to that process. The truth is that God's standard of obedience is so overwhelming that not one of us fallen sinners can ever live up to it. But our Savior, Jesus Christ, has given God that life of perfect obedience—of the whole heart, soul, and being—and he did it before we ever heard of it!

Because the perfect work of Jesus which sets us right with God was fully accomplished before we heard of it, we cannot supplement it, improve on it, or add anything to it. We can reject it—even sinful humans have that ability. Or we can, by grace, trust God's promise that he gladly receives every sinner who truly entrusts himself to God's grace demonstrated in

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Jesus is Worth the Effort

David C. Alves
Concord, N.H.

MOST OF US desire to make an impact on our world. We want to matter. When death's curtain falls, we want to have given the performance of our lives. Think of the young child shouting to gain her father's attention, "Look Daddy! See what I can do?" Or experience the more subtle, yet intense desire of the seasoned employee to please his boss by turning in the highest production figures for the week; or the author who sorts through words, to find that perfect one, which brings to life the vision she beholds. D. Elton Trueblood tells us that "The chief way in which we *make a difference* is in our daily work. By means of work we can leave the world different from the way we find it."

Solomon hated the burden of labor and all he had toiled for.

The average worker spends a minimum of 42 years of his or her life working. Yet little thought is given to the meaning of that work or the impact which that worker makes during those 42 years. As we return to our jobs, schools, and homes from our Labor Day vacation, it seems appropriate to ask ourselves some important questions: Does our work glorify or reflect Jesus? Is it meaningless or meaningful? And what makes the difference?

Many people today view work, at best, as a way to earn a living and, at worst, as something to be endured and suffered through. You may have friends who see work in this way or you may feel this way yourself. This view of work as meaningless has its roots deep in the history of humanity. Yet none have expressed it as passionately as the wisest, wealthiest man who ever lived.

Chasing after the wind

In the first few chapters of the book of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon has examined everything which humanity values and has found it all to be vain—meaningless. He has interrogated wisdom, explored folly, enjoyed wealth, sifted pleasure, and in Ecclesiastes 2:17-23, Solomon expresses his findings regarding the labors of life.

In verse 17 he says that he hated life because work was meaningless. Certainly there are times that we all ask, "What's the use? People are impossible to please. My wife doesn't appreciate me. The kids could care less. My boss thinks only of profit."

How meaningless must work be if even the work of a king is meaningless. Solomon *hated* life because of the burden of labor. He couldn't enjoy all that his hands had earned for him. Have you ever felt like that? He felt that all his work was a "chasing after the wind." Imagine chasing wind. That would be quite the meaningful vocation—a wind chaser. A wind chaser gets paid commission only though, depending upon how much wind he actually catches. Talk about someone who doesn't find much meaning when he leaves for work every morning.

If it were not enough to hate life, Solomon also tells us that he hated *"all he had toiled for"* [material wealth, fame, power, leisure time, the treasures of earth]. You've got to be kidding! Everything which we've been told will make us happy in life?

When someone is deciding upon a career, what are the *usual* criteria by which their selection is determined? What is usually of utmost importance? You know the answers: salary, medical, retirement, and other benefits; prestige, power, or responsibility of the position; possibility of upward mobility. Unfortunately, this is found even among Christians where the Lord has not yet spoken to us on this issue. Why? We are subconsciously conditioned by our culture's values. Our

society clings to the illusion that all these things will finally give us the happiness and fulfillment we seek. Jesus says, the pagans run hard after clothes, food, and drink; but that we should not, for these have been proven not to satisfy. The kingdom of God should have first priority in our lives.

This is what Solomon came to when he saw that his material wealth amounted to nothing. Ultimately, he had to leave his possessions to the one who was to come after him. Have you ever heard it said, "I never saw a hearse pulling a U-Haul." The truth is—you can't take it with you. All that Solomon had purchased by his hard labor would rust, melt, disintegrate, be stolen, or squandered by someone else. He would not get to enjoy any of it even though he had earned it in an honest fashion.

A pastor friend of mine tells the true story of a Christian couple who bought an old home in New England. Their goal was to make the home authentic. It was a tremendous project and they went about it with determination. The woman, we'll call her "Jane," had been an effective Bible teacher in the Philadelphia area. When she moved, her pastor wrote a letter to a minister in the area in which they were relocating, explaining all of Jane's skills. The pastor immediately went to her home and put before her the need for a new Bible teacher in that area. Her response was, "When we get the house finished, I'll do what I can." Jane's husband gave the pastor the same answer. "Give us a year and we will attend your church, support it and get involved."

What can make our work and labor here worthwhile?

So for one year they attended church spasmodically, never got involved, and contributed very little because the house was costing so much money. One year, almost to the date, the house was finished. They surveyed it with much joy. Two weeks later, Jane died. She never really lived in her perfect home.

What a danger we face today of investing our time and our talents in worthwhile, rewarding projects, but all the while missing what God intended for us.

Work as a Godly calling

So what became of the king as he realized the meaninglessness of his labors? In verse 20, we read that *despair set in.* This is often the honest response of those who do not know Christ when they face the truth about themselves or their situation. They lose themselves in drink, drugs, luxury, food, one-night stands, and alcohol. Truly their lives are seen as worthless when they take a close look at the fantasies they have believed. But we Christians, too, react in obsessive ways when we see that we have chosen ways other than God's in our search for the right "calling" or career. We avoid, we bypass, we defend, we rationalize. We'll do almost anything to avoid the awful truth of the emptiness of our lives. We find ourselves, like Solomon, immersed *"in pain and grief."* Later on in Chapter 4, Solomon resolves that all labor and all achievement spring from man's envy of his neighbor and that nothing follows after him but frustration, affliction, and anger.

How can we, as Christians, know that our work is meaningful? We can look at our career decisions as an opportunity to glorify God and reflect Christ. If you have yet to choose a vocation, seek God prayerfully. If you are already in a job, examine it carefully and honestly to see if it is a job which can glorify God.

Runia Klaas suggests three classes of occupations which Christians should hesitate to enter or take action to abandon because they cannot possibly bring glory to God. Occupations which contribute toward the harm of others; occupations that do not provide any *useful* service to society; and occupations which though permissible in themselves, are harmful for the particular Christian.

The Christian is to be like Jesus: set apart and holy (1 Pet. 1:16; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Jn. 3:2-3). We are in the process of being conformed to his likeness. We partake in a holy and *high calling* (Phil. 3:14). The Westminster Shorter Catechism defines our chief purpose as "to know and glorify God forever." And we are to glorify God in *all* that we do: especially our work, *"so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered"* (1 Tim. 6:1). Each Christian in his vocation and ministry is called to serve God in holiness and truth. Our work, then, should glorify God.

Therefore, in evaluating our career choices we must ask:

- "Would *Jesus* do the work I am doing?"
- "Would *Jesus* take a career in this field?"
- "Would this work reflect the Father to those around me?"

And once it is determined that our vocational choice itself will indeed not hinder a Christian witness then, in prayerful consideration over his or her specific employment, every Christian must ask two additional questions:

1. Where does God want *me* to **be**?
2. What does God want *me* to **do**?

In our country, everyone has the right and privilege to work at almost anything. As Christians, we have the freedom to work at anything which will not damage God's reputation. But that does not mean that I can enter that career just because I have the right and freedom. I must prayerfully and in counsel with the Holy Spirit arrive at what it is God has for me to do and where he desires me to carry out his work. No work is too high and no job is too low if in it, he can best be glorified through me.

The spiritual dynamic at work

Another way to know that our work is meaningful is to understand that regardless of the type of labor God calls us to, there is a spiritual dynamic that gives any Spirit-ap-

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The Certainty and Encouragement of God's Promises

Carole Lewis
Villisca, Iowa

HAVE YOU ever been on a vacation where everyone's patience eventually gets pushed to the limit? For the first few hours everything is fine—you're all telling jokes, singing, watching the scenery, and enjoying each other's company.

But after a while you run out of jokes and songs. The scenery starts to look the same. The sun comes out and it gets *hot*. Your spouse leaves the map at the last rest stop. Construction delays cause you to sit in traffic for two hours. Before long, you're at each other's throats. Sanity disappears and is replaced by whining. And complaining! You threaten to pull the car over to the side of the road. Your son tells his little sister that she's not really carsick. And Sis proves her brother wrong—all over the back of the car.

If complaining becomes a way of life, you will resist growth and end up with bitterness and hurt feelings.

Or maybe you've been on a camping trip or family retreat where everything is just *perfect*. You stay up half the night talking with friends and family and enjoying the terrific feeling. But the next day your friends don't seem as wonderful as they did the night before, and your nerves stay a little frazzled until you catch up on your sleep.

Sometimes even the best intentions get fouled up by stress, fatigue, or other less-than-ideal circumstances. Such is the case here. Previously, Moses has been to Mt. Sinai and received the Ten Commandments, God's laws, and now the Israelites are ready to begin their journey to the wonderful land God has promised them.

Journey to the promised land

Beginning in Chapter 10 of Numbers, we find the Israelites journey to the Promised Land. The succeeding chapters are filled with complaints of the people about their conditions. They complained about the hardships of the journey. They complained about the lack of variety in the food God gave them to eat. Moses let the complaints get to him and asked God to kill him if he (God) wasn't going to do anything about settling the problems (11:15). Even some of the leaders caught the "complaint disease" (12:1-3).

But notice that God always made provision for the people's desires. God fed 600,000 men, women, and children *every day* of their journey, even to the point of supplying an abundance of quail for them to have variety in their diet. And after all the aggravation and complaining, the Israelites finally arrived in the area of their final destination—the Promised Land. God had brought them safely from Egypt. He had put up with the whining and stubbornness. He had provided for them in situations that seemed hopeless. And finally, they stood on the outskirts of Canaan.

Moses selected one person from each tribe to go ahead and explore the land. The spies were gone forty days and then returned to camp with a report and some samples of Canaan's produce.

The Israelites' response to the spies' report was the usual one—complaining. They grumbled against Moses and Aaron, as usual, and this time they even started to look for a new leader who would take them back to Egypt. But two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, interrupted and voiced a minority opinion. They challenged the Israelites to go ahead into the land.

God would keep his promise

The advice of Joshua and Caleb was not well received. In fact, the people were ready to stone them. Put yourself in Joshua and Caleb's position. How do you feel toward people who reject your advice? How would you feel if after all these years of traveling, you were ready to go in and take the land, but were held back by pessimistic people?

God was angry—don't you think he had every right to be? He again suggested that Moses might be better off if God just wiped out the Israelites

and started a new nation of people. But Moses again interceded for the Israelites; not in defense of their actions, but in defense of their reputation as God's people. Moses knew that God could not break his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to establish a nation of their descendants. He also knew if God wiped out the Israelites, the Egyptians and other heathen nations would not understand a God who rescued his people only to kill them himself. So Moses asked God to forgive the Israelites, and God granted Moses' request. However, God knew this generation of people wasn't ready to receive the challenge or the blessings of entering the Promised Land.

How long would it be before the nation of Israel could enter Canaan? (vv. 34-35) When Moses told the people what God had said, they were at first sad. But then they decided to ignore God's instructions and invade the land anyway. Moses tried to persuade them not to do it, but they wouldn't listen. Their efforts to take the land with their own power were a failure.

Even though the Israelites learned the hard way that they couldn't enter Canaan during their lifetime, God assured Moses that it would happen eventually. In fact, Numbers 15 contains several instructions given to Moses to observe forty years later when the Israelites would finally go into the Promised Land. God made it clear that unintentional sins could be confessed and forgiven. But people who had no respect for God and sinned intentionally would be severely judged.

God protected and delivered them each time they listened to him and obeyed him. But they were powerless when they did things on their own.

You might think the main theme of this lesson is complaining (and it is a topic that should be considered). But the greater theme is the certainty of *God's promises*. In spite of the Israelites' complaints, God still delivered his people to the Promised Land—just as he promised he would.

Complaint leads to bitterness

Examine the issue of complaining in your life. For instance, how do you respond when your spouse gives you a list of jobs to do around the house? When a neighbor borrows something of yours without asking? When a boss loads you down with repetitive work? These situations can help you develop responsibility, patience, and wisdom—but only if you let them. You see, if complaining becomes a way of life, you will resist growth and end up with bitterness and hurt feelings instead of a list of positive qualities. And then, of course, if complaining becomes an automatic response to the difficulties of life, you will miss the joy of meeting the many, many challenges that God provides for your growth.

Think about the past week and list all the instances you can think of where you complained about something.

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Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E

S E E K

K N O W

October

1 Praise God for the progress that **Joel and Omega Garcia** have made toward establishing an Advent Christian congregation in LaPurisima, Mexico.

2 Pray for **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez** as they serve the Advent Christian congregation in El Florido, Mexico.

3 Praise God for the ministry of **John and Bonnie Gilbert**, members of North Park Community Church (A.C.) in San Diego, who are serving full-time with Mexican Medical Mission.

4 Pray for **Mario and Elena Cortez** as they work to establish an Advent Christian congregation in Ensenada, Mexico.

5 Praise God for the ministry of **Tecate Bible Institute** in their training of Mexican nationals for church planting and pastoral ministry.

6 Pray for Mexico field superintendent **Carlos Quintero** as he provides oversight for Advent Christian missions in Mexico and as he serves the Advent Christian congregation in Pasadena as pastor.

7 Praise God that **Jeff and Penny Vann** are ready to begin their ministry at Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

8 Pray that **Jeff, Penny, and their children** will adjust well to their new surroundings in the Philippines.

9 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Warren Prestidge** continues to have in his role as director of Oro Bible College.

10 Pray for **David Vignali** as he oversees several important aspects of Advent Christian missions work in the Philippines.

11 Praise God for the opportunity that several Advent Christian congregations have had to send **short-term missions teams** to Honduras, Mexico, and other locations.

12 Pray that God will raise up Advent Christian missionaries to serve in **India** and **Honduras**.

13 Praise God for the opportunity that Asia/Pacific

area director **George Teshera** had to minister in India and Malaysia for several weeks in May and June.

14 Pray for World Missions Director **Harold Patterson** as he provides oversight and direction to Advent Christian world mission work.

15 Praise God for New Zealand missionaries **Russell and Noelle Carle** as they continue to serve the Takanini congregation located in an Auckland suburb.

16 Pray that God will give **Russell and Noelle** wisdom and strength as they disciple Christians to reach their peers for Christ.

17 Praise God for the strength that he has given **Marion Damon** and **Barbara White** as they oversee the ministry of Advent Christian missions in India.

18 Pray that God's sovereign will be done in a difficult situation within our older Advent Christian conference in **India**.

19 Praise God for the opening that God has provided for Advent Christian missions in the Eastern European nation of **Croatia**.

20 Pray that God will work through the church planting ministry of Pastor **Desire Ahola** as he works to organize an Advent Christian congregation in Croatia.

21 Praise God for the expansion of Advent Christian **ethnic congregations** in several important American cities.

22 Pray for Advent Christian **pastors** who are serving urban and ethnic congregations throughout the United States.

23 Praise God for good **Penny Crusade** reports from throughout the Advent Christian Church.

24 Pray that response to the annual **Christmas in October** drive sponsored by the WHFMS will provide important resources for honoring Advent Christian missionaries and for expanding missions work.

25 Praise God that the Advent Christian Church in **Japan** will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 1998.

26 Pray for **Steven and Ann Lay** as they continue their church planting ministry near Kobe, Japan.

27 Praise God for the ministry that **Amos Gbaa** continues to have in establishing an Advent Christian congregation in Ghana.

28 Pray for Advent Christians and all followers of Christ in the war-torn nation of **Liberia**.

29 Praise God that because of his loving kindness expressed through Jesus Christ—we have the **hope and promise** of eternal life.

30 Pray that God will continue to use **Advent Christian missions** to reach men and women with the good news of the gospel.

31 Pray for Japan missionary **Karen Rigney** who is home for a short furlough.

Questions continued from page 13

Jesus Christ.

In this most fundamental sense, we are justified before God solely through faith-trust, and not through any works-obedience on our part. We must also remember that our trusting God is not a work we perform, but that it is the work of God who creates faith in our hearts (John 6:29; Acts 16:14).

Some evangelicals have argued that Christ made salvation possible but that we must do one thing to make it a reality—namely, accept Jesus as personal Savior. Others have agreed that Christ made salvation possible but have insisted that we must do several things to make it a reality—believe, repent, confess Christ publicly, or be baptized in water.

I suggest that both groups are correct in the obedience they seek, but that both are missing the point of Romans in how they express it. I believe Paul would say to both sides: "Your fundamental mistake is thinking that you sinners can do anything to set yourselves right with God. God has already done all that needs to be done and all that will ever count toward that end, in the perfect, now-finished, accomplishments of Jesus' life and death in your stead."

All we can do is *receive* this salvation, and we do that by trusting the good news that God accepts us in Christ and for his sake. Jesus then asks the believer to express that faith by being baptized in Jesus' name and by giving one's self to God thereafter, as a living sacrifice in view of his mercies. Baptism, in the New Testament, serves the role many evangelicals assign to the "sinner's prayer." It is the way Jesus himself designated for the believer to express the faith which itself receives God's finished salvation.

It is comforting to a weak and faulty sinner to know that we are saved by grace through faith, rather than by grace through obedience—one part of which is to believe. The old invitation hymn told the truth when it urged: "Believe, obey, *the work is done*!" ❑

Edward Fudge is an attorney living in Houston, Texas, and author of several books including *The Fire That Consumes*. If you have a biblical or theological question you would like to ask Edward to respond to, you can send it to the *Advent Christian Witness*, PO Box 23152, Charlotte, NC 28227. Or, if you are on-line, you can send it to Mayerpub@aol.com and we will forward it to him.

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Make a note of each instance—take the time to list *all* of them. After reviewing your list of complaints, ask yourself, "Am I becoming a chronic (regular) complainer?" And if the answer is yes, ask yourself, "Do I want to go on this way, or do something now to change my attitude?" ❑

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Effort

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proved vocation its meaning. In 1 Cor. 15:58, Paul is summing up an argument which we will look at more closely after we read the passage: *"Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."*

This summation comes at the end of an argument where Paul is explaining the nature of the resurrection and the results of Christ's victory over death. Do you see it? *"Your labor in the Lord is not in vain."*

It is not *meaningless* because of our Lord's resurrection. The difference between Solomon's philosophy of work and Paul's is that before Christ was raised, death ruled. There was no hope for humanity. Everything becomes meaningless if it all ends at death. As Paul says in verse 32, *"If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'"*

It is the fact that death is not the end for us that makes our work and labor here worthwhile. It is worthwhile because our *real* work goes on unseen while we are about our earthly vocation. Each child of God should manifest the Father in whatever he is called to do. We care for our equipment or we manage our employer's business as though it were our own. We are honest in all our dealings even when we are ridiculed.

I have a friend who was told by his employer that if he wanted to have the company insurance cover any further instances of his little son's ear infection, he should not mention that the baby had been treated for the condition prior to his employment. My friend, in a gracious and humble way continued to fill out the form including the prior treatments. The employer looked at the form and looked at my friend and said, "Do you always have to be so honest?" When it comes to doing a job that demands careful precision however, guess who the boss gives the special assignment to. He also, after only three months on the job, received the largest Christmas bonus for a new employee in the company's history. My friend has a reputation for honesty and integrity. What do your employer or fellow employees say about you? What do your teachers, family, or spouses say about you?

God has blessed many of us with work. And our work can be meaningful if in it we seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. If we see our work place—be it the office, a factory, garage, school room, truck, bus, home, or church—as integral to the spiritual appointments and works God has prepared for us to walk in, everything we do will have eternal consequences and the greatest meaning. If we determine that it is *God* we work for and if we are on *his* assignment, about *his* business, we are storing up for ourselves treasures in heaven. This poem from an unknown author says it well:

Master, where shall I work today?
And my love flowed warm and free;
And He pointed out a tiny plot,
And He said, "Tend *that* for Me."

But I answered quickly, "Oh, no, not there;
Not any one could see
No matter how well my task was done—
Not that little place for *me*!

And His voice, when He spoke, it was not stern,
But He answered me tenderly:
"Disciple, search that heart of thine;
Are you working for *them*, or for *Me*?
Nazareth was just a little place,
And so was Galilee." ❑

David Alves is a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and is studying under Ralph Neighbor, Jr. toward his doctor of ministry degree in "Cell-Church Leadership and Church Revitalization" at Regent University in Virginia Beach. He is currently serving as the senior pastor of New Life Fellowship, an Advent Christian cell-church in Concord, N.H.

At the Brink

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Star reported that YFC rallies were conducted in 1,450 cities and towns. During this period of youth ministry expansion, rallies filled Madison Square Garden and Carnegie Hall; 4,000 gathered in Philadelphia; 5,000 in Boston. *Newsweek* reported attendance at the Chicago YFC Memorial Day Rally at Soldier Field to be 65,000.

President Harry Truman said, "Many times during the past decade the conviction has come to me with increasing force that a revival of the spirit of old-fashioned religion is what the world needs." Revival began with the Billy Graham Los Angeles Rally in 1949 when during eight weeks, one half million people attended in a tent that held just over 6,000. Revivals broke out on campuses as well—at Wheaton, Huntington, Greenville, Pasadena, North Park, John Brown, Houghton, and Asbury colleges. Even at high schools there were hundreds of young people coming to Christ.

Though short-lived, the impact resulted in the establishment of youth organizations like Campus Crusade, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and the Jesus Movement. Youth clubs like AWANA, Boys Brigade, and Pioneer Girls also came into being.

Where does that leave us today? ❑



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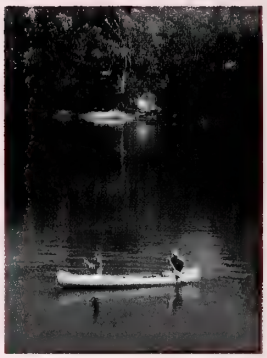
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Advent Christian WITNESS

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God's Wide Angle



A Conversation with Joni Eareckson Tada

October 1996

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Followers of Jesus across the world know Joni's story. We asked her about her current ministry and about her perspectives on several important issues in both church and society.

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On the Cover

The background of our cover is taken from Joni's painting *Land That Stretches Afar*, which will be available at Christian bookstores in November in a full-color, signed, limited-edition print. Used courtesy of *Joni and Friends*, and Zondervan Publishing House.

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Sola Deo Gloria



SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE

THIS HAS BEEN a special week for most Christians in and around Charlotte, including us who work at the Advent Christian denominational offices. Billy Graham has returned to his hometown to hold a four-day crusade in Charlotte's brand-new football stadium (where earlier in the week the hometown Carolina Panthers humbled my San Francisco 49ers). Preparations for the crusade have led to a high level of cooperation among followers of Christ in and around Charlotte as we anticipate a great number of people who will have their lives touched by Jesus Christ for the first time.

There have been times when Christians have persecuted others.

On Tuesday before the crusade, I had opportunity to attend Dr. Graham's press conference and ask him his view of how American Christians are responding to the persecution faced by our fellow Christians in nations like China and the Sudan. One part of his response struck me. "I think," according to Dr. Graham, "we persecute people ourselves; in our own way, either mentally, or by our acts, or by inaction."

Unfortunately, Dr. Graham is right. There have been times when Christians have subtly or overtly persecuted others, and even each other, over the past two-thousand years. The Christian history of Europe is filled with rivalry and conflict between Catholics and Protestants. In some cases, Christians with political power have used coercion and force to compel belief. Today, in places like the former Yugoslavia and Northern Ireland, we see the destructive results that occur when some Christians use force as a means to compel others to think and live like they think they should.

While Christians in America don't use physical force to compel others, more often than we'd like to admit, we're not afraid to use other methods. Ron Wilson puts it well, "We're tempted to use words to destroy. A little sarcasm here. A biting remark there. A self-righteous riposte." What do we do when someone has a different theological view than we do? How do we respond when others disagree with us over an issue like style of worship? How do we treat people who embrace Islam, Mormonism, or various parts of the New Age Movement?

In the New Testament, Paul gives followers of Jesus some sound, practical advice. He reminds the Ephesian Christians that a vital aspect of Christian maturity is the ability to speak the truth in love. In other words, we're not to use truth as a weapon to damage and destroy others, but to draw them to a God who has expressed his love for them in Jesus Christ. Jesus never condoned the use of force as a weapon to make people follow him. The Master never used vindictive and scornful rhetoric as a tactic to win a debate or prove his point. The only time he ever got angry with a group of people was when he was confronted by the hypocrisy of the religious leaders of his time.

When we allow the Gospel to be used as a physical or a verbal weapon against others, we bring great harm to the cause of Christ. Instead of drawing people to the Master, we wind up driving them away. That is not the way of Jesus. We as followers of Jesus are to speak the truth of the Gospel and treat others in a way that reflects the biblical truth that human beings are created in God's image and are valuable to him.

I confess my own sin here. There have been more times than I'd like to admit when I've used a sarcastic comment, a biting remark, or a self-righteous riposte to make a point or win an argument. Speaking the truth in love is something that I need the Holy Spirit's help with everyday. That's true for all of us who follow Jesus. Learning to communicate the truth of the Gospel with passion and compassion is something you and I cannot do without daily guidance from the Holy Spirit. What's more important anyway—winning arguments or seeing God change lives? ❑

CHALLENGES to the Worldwide Advance of the Gospel

Jim Reapsome
Wheaton, Ill.

JESUS SAID the gates of hell would not prevail against his church. By saying this he made clear that the advance of the gospel would be contested every inch of the way by the forces of hell. The apostle Paul described this opposition as enemy strongholds. He said he faced this opposition hour by hour, and day by day. He said it was like fighting the wild beasts in Ephesus.

As we honor tonight those who have fought the good fight, those who have finished the race, those who have earned our recognition, respect, honor, and praise, we do well to contemplate the unfinished task that confronts us. What are some of the challenges to the worldwide advance of the gospel?

Challenges we face

For one thing, we face serious opposition from other religions. Take Islam, for instance. A missionary in London goes to Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park every Sunday to preach about Jesus. Immediately he is surrounded by more than a hundred Muslims who pound him with questions and engage him in such a raucous debate that gradually the crowds get tired of the debate, and people drift away from the sound of the gospel.

Aggressive Muslim expansion is seen in all of the suburbs around Chicago. One of their tactics is to buy one home in a cul-de-sac, turn it into a makeshift mosque, drawing other Muslims. Gradually the other people sell their homes one-by-one, and you have in effect another Muslim beachhead.



Jim Reapsome delivered this message at the banquet honoring eight retiring Advent Christian missionaries held at the Advent Christian General Conference triennial convention last June in Tampa, Florida. Rev. Reapsome is a veteran missionary and currently serves as editor of *Pulse* and the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly.*

In some countries, of course, the opposition is much worse than that. A Christian convert has been sentenced to death in Kuwait. Many have been imprisoned in Egypt. Several leading pastors have been killed in Iran. Priests and nuns have been shot and killed in Algeria. Many Christians have died at the hands of Muslims in the Philippines.

The expansion of Islam is connected directly to both economic and political forces in the Middle East. Some of the money we pay to Saudi Arabia for oil goes to finance Muslim schools, universities, hospitals, and radio and television programs across Africa. All of the things we are doing to evangelize Muslims, including sending professionals to work in Muslim countries as so-called tentmaker missionaries, are well known to Muslim scholars and organizations. The vast majority of our missionary publications are circulated among Muslim leaders, including our own *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* and *World Pulse.*

While Islam is the most visible religious obstacle to the advance of the gospel, we must also recognize that Hinduism and Buddhism are growing and flourishing as well. Ju-

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daism, some parts of Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy—especially in Russia, Romania, and Bulgaria—and liberal Protestantism also strongly resist our attempts to preach Christ and bring people to faith in him. In Western Europe and North America, we face the terrible danger of religious relativism, or pluralism, which says that all religious systems are true, and it doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere. One missionary leader took a poll of American Bible college students and found that 43 percent think sincerity of belief is enough for salvation.

The world of religion today is—as it was in the days of Moses, the prophets, and Jesus—still the strongest foe of the gospel. But we must move on to other developments that stand as challenges to the worldwide advance of the gospel.

Urbanization

One of the most notable challenges is the rapidly increasing urbanization of the world's people. Urban population grows by three percent a year. By the year 2000, half of the world's people will live in cities. In Latin America today, seventy-three percent of the people live in crowded urban areas. Urban growth in Asia equals a new city of 140,000 people every day. China's growing urban population will have to be supported by twenty-five percent less arable land by the year 2000.

When I was in Nairobi, Kenya, for a conference, each day we took a bus to the United Nations conference center outside the city. The roads were jammed with every kind of vehicle imaginable, plus hundreds of people walking. People carried what they could on their backs. They were literally fleeing to the city. The loss of land, food, fuel, and fodder drives them from the country to the city. At the same time, the families left behind in the country have to raise more children to compensate for the loss, or death, of those who have migrated to the cities.

Why is urbanization a challenge to world missions? People lose their sense of identity and get caught in a host of different activities that block them from hearing the gospel. Cities include people in all ranges of society, from the very poor to the very rich. Each class presents unique challenges. It is extremely tough for missionaries to survive in the world's poorest places, but it is also hard to penetrate apartment complexes and the high-walled homes of the rich. It takes a long time to build lasting friendships.

In Santiago, Chile, where my son-in-law is in business, he and my daughter have joined with other businessmen and their wives to start a church among foreign and Chilean business people. Many have come to faith in Christ, and their church is growing. This is a unique opportunity, and other mission agencies are catching the vision for reaching out to businessmen, professional people, and diplomats.

The vast majority of our evangelism programs are in print, and they assume people can read, but they can't.

There are other worldwide difficulties as well. A friend sent me a copy of some really hilarious misprints in advertisements. One of them said this: Illiterate? Write for our course on learning how to read. I wonder how many illiterates read that ad? Seriously, worldwide illiteracy is growing, and that makes it hard to reach people with the gospel. The vast majority of our evangelism programs are in print, and they assume people can read, but they can't. This is an enormous challenge to us. Today, some 800 million people can't read, and by the year 2000, it will be one billion. Of course, we have to face the terrible realities of poverty, hunger, famine, war, millions of refugees, exploitation, slavery, and the sale of children for sex purposes. These things are huge obstacles to the advancement of the gospel. Whether we like it or not, these conditions make it hard to reach people for Christ.

The richest 20 percent of the world's people get 85 percent of the world's production. The poorest 20 percent get one percent. The challenge for the next 20 to 30 years will be to provide food at affordable prices for almost 100 million more people every year. As it stands now, 800 million people are chronically undernourished. One hundred and fifty-seven million people live in countries affected by famines and food shortages. One billion people do not have access to clean water. Two billion lack electricity or adequate sanitation.

In Ethiopia, for example, the average size of a farm is smaller than one of our football fields. There are some 90,000 slaves in Mauritania. In Sudan, armed gangs raid villages, kill the men, and take the women and children as slaves. Since 1989, the number of refugees has shot up from fifteen to twenty-three million. More than 100 million people live in countries other than their own, and twenty-three million are displaced within their own countries. Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, Rwanda, and Zaire are current examples of this problem.

How does this affect the proclamation of the gospel? As the economic gap increases between the rich and the poor, people's suspicions about the motives and values of Christians are aroused. Also, under extreme hardship and suffering, people are ripe for violence and revolution, not for the church and the gospel. In Rwanda, after some 300,000 people were butchered in a country that had eighty-five percent enrolled in various kinds of churches, it is proving extremely difficult to talk to people about Jesus.

True, many people have come to faith in refugee camps and through the generous giving of food, medicine, and other kinds of relief. In the refugee camps in Sudan, for example, many new churches have been started. But generally the masses of oppressed people are not turning to Christian faith in sizable numbers. The harsh

facts of life make it difficult to believe that salvation rests in anything other than politics and improved standards of living. Their only hope is a restructuring of society, so they and their children can get a better deal.

Of course, we cannot offer the gospel as a cure-all for all of their problems. In fact, it is not unusual for pastors and evangelists to quit preaching in the face of overwhelming social needs. It is easier to work at immediate relief for the suffering than it is to invest in long-term seed-sowing of the gospel.

The challenge of American popular culture

Let me suggest one further challenge to the worldwide advance of the gospel. It's what I call the powerful influence of Western movies, music, television, books, and magazines. For example, MTV is now available to 250 million homes. It is going into India in both Hindi and English. It is going into China in Mandarin. It is seen in eighteen Asian countries.

Listen to what the head of MTV says: "Kids on the streets of Tokyo have more in common with the kids on the streets in London than they do with their parents. We're catching these kids at a stage in life when all kids are essentially the same, when they virtually have to rebel from their parents."

Why is this a challenge to the gospel? Because our movies, music, books, magazines and TV shows for the most part convey a sensual message. Their constant bombardment dulls the spiritual sensitivities of people. They try to find relief in TV, videos, transistor radios, cassettes, and Sony Walkmans. In the Jordanian desert between Amman and Aqaba, my wife and I saw the Bedouins with gas trucks parked behind their tents, fueling generators so they could watch TV.

The god of this world is blinding their eyes. His message is basically the same: You can escape, you can have fun, you can be happy by gorging yourself in the things the United States has to offer. Of course, missionaries find this is one of the hardest things they have to live down—all of the garbage spewing forth from a supposedly Christian country.

God's powerful change agent

Anyway, our message of hope and salvation in Christ is obliterated, principles of godly living are overwhelmed in the mass media. Righteousness, justice, compassion, and humility are not extolled. But illicit sex and drugs are glorified.

You are probably thinking, "This is such a dark picture, why would anyone want to follow in the footsteps of these missionaries we honor tonight?" That's true, if you look at only one side of the story. I make no apologies for talking about challenges to the advancement of the gospel, because I believe the Bible compels us to face them squarely. We must know what's happening in this world in which the gospel competes for people's attention, and for their hearts, minds, and souls.

The god of this world has a message: you can escape, you can have fun, you can be happy, if you gorge yourself with the garbage that spews forth from the United States.

But we also have to thank God for what he has done in the past through these wonderful servants of Christ, what he is doing now, and what he will continue to do. These challenges do not take God by surprise. The gospel is still God's powerful change agent, and our faith in the power of the gospel remains unshaken.

Look, for example, at what has happened since God knocked down the Berlin Wall and shattered the Iron Curtain in 1989. Thousands of people have been won to Christ throughout the former Soviet Union, and in former communist countries like Romania, Albania, Poland, and Bulgaria. The once impenetrable Hindu nation of Nepal has been opened to the gospel, thousands have been converted to Christ, and many new churches established. The former communist nation of Mongolia, where there were no known believers, has opened to the gospel and many new churches have been started. Hebrew-Christian congregations have sprung up across Israel. Muslim refugees in the Middle East have been won to Christ in Jordan.

Many national evangelical fellowships have started around the world. In many countries they are joining hands for national evangelistic campaigns. There is a new worldwide movement, called *AD 2000 and Beyond*, which is galvanizing church and mission agencies to make a concerted effort to reach all of the world's unreached ethnic groups by the end of this century. Churches across America are focusing on sending people to specific unreached groups. The world's leading missionary radio broadcasters have joined hands and heads to identify people who have not yet heard the gospel by radio, learn their languages, and find people to do programs in those languages.

Churches and mission agencies are developing many new creative strategies for identifying and reaching the unreached. People are going into hard places, into closed countries, to teach English and to work as professionals and businessmen. We are using the media, music, drama, and films in new ways. The "Jesus" film is our most effective mass media outreach. It is being seen by thousands of Muslims and Hindus. The ships of Operation Mobilization are going into ports all around the world with evangelistic literature. A new satellite has just been launched that is bringing Christian television into the entire Middle East. Computer technology has been harnessed to speed up the translation of the Bible. We are investing new

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A Proper DOUBLE STANDARD

When it comes to sin, we should be hard on ourselves and gentle with others.

Gary Thomas

JEANNE CHANTAL was a devout French woman of the early seventeenth century. Her greatest desire was to love God, and she thought that could best be done by living like a nun. There was just one problem. She had a family.

Torn between her life situation and her heart's desire, Jeanne poured out her heart to one of the most skillful spiritual directors of her day, Francis de Sales. Francis listened to her travail, then warned her, "You must learn to love piety in such a way that it is also lovable to others."

If there is one lesson the church needs to apply today, it is learning to love piety in such a way that it is also lovable to others. If we erect prisons of piety that keep us and our families safely guarded from the outside world, we may have achieved a measure of protection from some of the world's temptations, but at what price?

What separates Christian love from religious piety?

The great French mystic, Francois Fenelon, wrote that "obedience must be loved rather than disobedience feared." Focusing on sin to avoid it makes us little different than those who focus on sin to participate in it. One is consumed by sin because of fear; the other is consumed by sin because of enjoyment. But both are consumed by sin.

Christians who do not learn the freedom of Christ are Christians who present a substandard faith to the world. The brilliance of Christianity is that it is the only religion that delivers us from both sin and legalism. "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Christians have got to get used to living in a culture that is hostile to our faith. I'm still amazed at Christians who raise their blood pressure over the sin of the world. Let's be honest. Sinners sin. That's what sinners do. Christians who expect anything else will face nothing but disillusionment.

Theologian Richard John Neuhaus tells the story of being driven to the airport by a concerned Christian who spent the entire forty-five-minute drive decrying the evils of the world. It's difficult to mention all our society's evil in forty five minutes, but this fellow was giving it his best shot. Finally, as they reached the airport, Mr. Neuhaus told the man something that every Christian needs to hear: "The times may be bad, but they are the only times we are given. Remember, hope is still a Christian virtue and despair a sin."

The times are bad, certainly. But God's love is powerful. It is our Christian duty to hope and not despair.

Mature Christians have a double standard. They are hard on themselves when it comes to sin, but gracious and gentle toward others. Jesus said take the log out of our own eye first, then attend to our neighbor's speck. William Law, the great 18th-century Anglican, said that as we grow, we become less accommodating of sin in our own lives, but less judgmental of sin in other lives.

Too often we make excuses for our own sins ("The devil knows just where to get me"), yet we point the finger at everyone else without ever considering their particular weaknesses. It should be the other way around. Paul called himself the chief of sinners. Now, it's hard for me to believe that there weren't plenty of people in Paul's day who were sinning with utter abandon. Obviously, Paul had developed one standard by which to judge himself, and another standard by which to consider the sin of others.

We should do the same.

It can be tremendously difficult to live righteously in an unrighteous world. It is even more difficult to wit-

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GOD'S WIDE ANGLE

A Conversation with Joni Eareckson Tada

Joni Eareckson Tada is no stranger to most evangelicals and Advent Christians. Through her best-selling autobiography, Joni, *we learned of the 1967 diving accident that confined her to a wheelchair. And we discovered her growing Christian faith—a faith shaped and tested by the difficulties, hardships, and struggles of her physical disability. Today, Joni continues to speak, write, and paint. And her ministry,* Joni and Friends *looks for opportunities to communicate the good news of God's grace to people with disabilities, and to address political and social concerns ranging from euthanasia to the Americans with Disabilities Act. Bob Mayer and Dennis Peterson caught up with Joni last December during her two-day visit to Charlotte, and asked her about her current ministry and about her perspectives on several important issues in both church and society.*

Joni, many of our readers are familiar with your story and your first two books. What directions in ministry has God taken you during the past ten years?

That's a tough question to answer because there are so many areas of ministry that I enjoy. I'm a painter. I paint holding the brush between my teeth, and so I'm always at the art easel on weekends. I'm a speaker and a disability advocate. If there's an issue that's disability-related coming up in Congress, or if there's a question about Medicaid or Medicare cutbacks, I'm connecting with my friends on a state or federal level. I do a lot of advocacy work on behalf of persons with disabilities.

Let's see...what else...I'm a good wife; I'm a very good wife to my husband. That takes up a lot of time. I enjoy singing occasionally, and at my church I'm involved with our singing group, our choir, and our Wednesday night prayer meetings, so that keeps me busy. But I enjoy writing. What has kept me busy is writing this new book called *Heaven: Your Real Home.* I've enjoyed that enormously.

I should back up, before I talk about writing. We're involved with wonderful programs to get the gospel to people with disabilities. We have a program in our ministry called "Wheels for the World" where we collect old, used wheelchairs, refurbish them, (shine 'em up, shape 'em up), and gather teams of people to go overseas and hand-deliver these wheelchairs to disabled people who live on straw mats or cardboard boxes or get pushed-around and beat up old baby carriages and connect these people with local churches or with handicapped associations. That keeps me busy. I wanted to put that before the writing. But I guess the bottom line to your question is that writing takes up a lot of time, and I enjoy that. This new book has been real fun to put together.

Yesterday I was talking with one of our staff and mentioned I was

working on some questions to ask you. And she responded, "If I had the opportunity, I'd like to ask Joni what it was like for her to begin her ministry as a single woman with a disability."

That was almost a double handicap. To be a woman, and to embark on structuring an international organization that would address the needs of persons with disabilities, that would share the gospel with handicapped individuals, that would bring a lasting change to the church, it was pretty tough to get the attention of pastors and seminary heads. It was pretty tough to get folks to take you seriously. But I'm grateful that there have been changes in the way people think. Now, when folks encounter me, I don't think they see the wheelchair after awhile. They stop thinking that I can't use my hands, and I think they forget about the blonde hair, the mascara, and the lipstick. And they listen to what I have to say, honed and sharpened, from twenty-nine years in a wheelchair. I think that's given me a kind of authority when I talk about euthanasia and other end-of-life issues, when I talk about suffering, when I talk about heaven, or when I talk about disability-related issues. I think that twenty-nine years in a wheelchair helps. At first it was a liability, but now it's become an asset because I've survived so long. And folks will listen.

So you've found, over time, that people have taken what you've tried to communicate more seriously.

I think so. After you live for twenty-nine years in a wheelchair, and you've survived, and you've smiled, not in spite of problems but because of them, you've had brushes with death because you're handicapped, or you've encountered families who have just grieved over the diagnosis of Lou Gehrig's disease, or sat by the bedside of a terminally-ill friend and had to decide whether or not it's right to pull the plug—when you're advising and counseling with people in these circumstances, it gives your words depth and weight.

Several years ago, you were active in helping to pass the Americans with Disabilities Act, a significant piece of legislation designed to provide disabled and handicapped people equal access under the law. In your view, what has been the impact of that legislation in our society?

I think there are two provisions which will be most helpful to persons with disabilities. First, the provision to make public accommodations more accessible. Even just wheeling from my room over to here for this interview, it was nice to have a ramp and it was nice to have a curb cut (I wish there were a few more). The equal access laws in public accommodations will be a big plus. This provision provides that any new buildings are required to be accessible and that old buildings will need to be refurbished in order to be accessible. Twenty-five years from now, we'll see a fully accessible society.

However, it's still a matter of complaint and compliance. People with disabilities will have to say, "There really should be a ramp here," or "That doorway, I can't get through it. It needs to be widened." Suppose there were no ramps here, and in making my way here this morning, I may have had to go to the manager and say, "That ramp that you put in is crumbling and falling apart. It's dangerous." Folks aren't going to automatically make society more accessible just because the law is on the books. People like me will have to say, "It's working," or "No, it's not working." So that's one provision which I think is a big plus.

The second provision, deals with employment, and I'm not sure if it's working well. You hear so much in the news these days about lawsuits against employers for the most ridiculous of reasons. It's unfortunate, I think, that people have abused the law by filing complaints with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and they're not even disabled in my estimation. That's unfortunate and will give the law a bad name. We face a long process of court rulings before the dust settles and the law ultimately, twenty-five years from now, makes sense to society.

When the Act was passed, some evangelicals were opposed to it, because they felt that it would create government interference in our lives. Do you think these folks tended to overreact to some of these fears?

Yes, I do. I think that there are good religious exemption provisions in the law. A church is not required to be accessible. The religious tenants provision in the law allows churches to do what they want with their facilities. But, how embarrassing if the only buildings in a community that are not accessible twenty-five years from now are church buildings. Christians are called to respond to a higher law, and we ought to set the pace. It's unfortunate that some will look for ways to circumvent the requirements.

However, a church building is required to be accessible if the congregation hires someone with a disability and that person's wheelchair could not get to the restroom in the church or could not get to the work area in the church. If a congregation hires someone with a disability, then the church is required to comply with the provisions of the law that would make things accessible to that individual.

And that leads to this question—how can local churches be sensitive to people with physical disabilities and to their family members?

The Lord Jesus in Luke 14 made a specific point—that if you hold a banquet; that is, if you hold a church supper, sponsor an event, or do an activity connected with the advancement of the gospel; don't just invite

your rich neighbors, your friends, and your relatives. Invite the poor, the disabled, the blind. I find that intriguing, because the Lord Jesus must have known that we, the church, would need a specific mandate to reach out to this group of individuals. Otherwise, they would be ignored.

Nowhere else does the Bible get specific over who ought to be invited to the banquet. But Jesus does mention the disabled, the lame, and the blind. And I think he knows that if left up to our own devices, we, the church, would never care two hoots about these people. So Jesus makes a special point of telling us not only to invite those who are easy to invite, or those we can easily accommodate, or those with whom we feel comfortable. Instead, connect with those people who rattle our comfort zones a little, who force us to think creatively about how to accommodate their needs. And I love what he says next: "Do this and you will be blessed."

I think some people have the idea that it's a "pity the poor and unfortunate" kind of ministry— "I feel sorry for them, let's do something to help them." Jesus squelches that perspective and turns the tables when he says, "and *you* will be blessed."

In other words, when you serve, God will honor that and will bring blessing to you.

And it comes back to that parable in Luke 14 where Jesus says, "And do this so that my father's house may be full." Jesus knew something about church growth that we don't. We're always holding big church growth seminars where you concentrate on the better, the brighter, the more beautiful. But Jesus' definition of church growth is to get out to the disabled, the lame, the blind, and the poor, so that "my father's house might be full." The Master knows that the church is missing out on something with persons with disabilities, when the "weaker members" are ignored or neglected. I think that mandate should be enough for the church in America to get its priorities and values straight regarding church growth.

All of us wrestle with physical, emotional, and spiritual traumas. And those can be times that bring us to the edge of hopelessness, to the edge of despair. We often ask, "Where is God in the midst of all this?" And that's not an easy question to answer. How has God helped you to wrestle with this question in your own life?

There are many things that I could say, but I'll share something that I haven't talked about much in interviews. There's a little verse in Lamentations 3, that reads, "Though he brings grief, he does not afflict willingly the sons of men." It seems almost like an oxymoron. How is it that God brings grief, but that he does not afflict willingly. How do you put those two together? That one little verse in Lamentations 3 pretty much hits the nail on the head of our own dilemma with suffering. How is it that God permits these things to happen and yet if we look at the life of Christ, we see him bending over backwards to eradicate suffering, disease, and deformity? As I contemplate that, I tend to agree with a lot of Reformed theologians who argue that it seems like God has two wills here. First, he looks at suffering through a narrow lens and he hates the isolated incident. We're told in Psalms that he does not delight in the death of his saints. He does not take pleasure in pain. He feels the sting in his chest when a mother gives birth to an infant with Down's syndrome. He grieves with us. He does not take lightly our affliction. He says that. He does not willingly, from the heart, afflict the sons of men. So he hates the isolated incident—the abuse of a child, the rape of a woman, the injury to the neck, the diagnosis of cancer.

But then, God has a wide-angle lens where he looks at that suffering, from a broader perspective. He sees our suffering fitting into this marvelous mosaic that pans out for all of eternity, and he sees the beauty, the complexity, and the order of how even this dark thread fits into some pattern that gives him great glory and good pleasure. I think that helps. When I first read Romans 8:18 which says, "your light and momentary afflictions are not worth being compared with the glories laid beyond," I struggled with that. Well, what's this? Is the Bible calling my affliction "light and momentary?" I mean, God, you think my paralysis is light and momentary? That's ridiculous. This is permanent paralysis for the rest of my life. What is the Bible trying to do, say that I'm in spiritual denial if I hurt, calling it light and momentary?

So that it almost seems trivial.

Yes! But then the Bible always looks at suffering from this broad point of view, this wide-angle lens point of view. Your light and momentary affliction is only light and momentary in comparison with the glory that lies beyond. So in that little passage in Lamentations, we find God's way of communicating this broad perspective that our suffering fits into. God looks at it infinitely, and in this broad pattern. We need God's wide-angle perspective and that requires faith. And in terms of faith that's where the rubber meets the road. When we struggle with these issues, we need to back up and gain God's perspective.

For me, it's helped enormously to know that my response to every hardship is a way to glory that far outweighs the inconvenience here on earth. It's a heavenly perspective, it's a wide-angle lens perspective, it's a perspective that helps all those other verses make sense, even Lamentations 3. It's a perspective that I think brings God pleasure because it's wisdom. It's the wisdom of seeing things from his point of view.

About three years ago, you wrote a provocative response to Derek Humphrey's book, *Final Exit*. How should we as Christians respond

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THE MAGIC BOX

Miriam Snow Priebe
Mechanic Falls, Maine

ONE OF MY wedding presents was from Auntie York. It was a cloth-covered cardboard box filled with little rolls of paper. On each roll Auntie had written a Scripture verse—the idea being that each morning we would take out a roll and then have our verse for the day to think about.

As a young married couple with one small child we settled into Houghton Hall, spreading our few possessions about the three-room apartment. On the kitchen table I placed Auntie's gift. And Charles and I started our days with a verse from the box.

We had a lot of young boys and girls living near us, and before long, I was making cookies and popcorn for quite a crowd. There were quite a few attractions at our place—our baby, our phonograph, and Auntie's box. Herman and Marty Clark, the Hazlett boys, and the Knowlton children all would drop by for a cookie and a verse for the day.

One weekend my husband's parents came on a visit. Mother and Dad Priebe still had teenagers at home and led busy lives. Ma loved the box; so I gave it to her. Then I sat down and wrote a letter to Auntie, who, by that time, was living in a nursing home. I told her how we all loved the box and I thanked her again for it. I told her that I had passed it on to someone I loved very much.

A few weeks later I received a package in the mail. *It was another box from Auntie.* Her fine old handwriting was getting a bit shaky; but the precious verses were with us once more.

We carried that box to Ohio, then to Delaware. Our children brought their friends to our kitchen. The wrestling team came by—the cheerleading squad searched for their verses; and so we literally wore out the box. Somewhere, in one of our moves, it was lost.

Auntie (who wasn't an aunt at all, but a dear friend of my parents) was no longer alive at that time. Though I could only remember meeting her once, she had become, through her box, a part of our family. We mourned the loss of her box and we missed Auntie.

After our children were grown, my husband received a call to a church in South America. It was a big move for us, and we were a bit fearful as we packed our personal things for shipping, and put other things in storage. One of the last things we did before leaving the United States was to gather up all the boxes of momentos and souvenirs that we had both accumulated through the years. The plan was to save only the things that were most valuable. We built a fire in the fireplace and tossed away my graduation corsage (nicely dried), old programs, church bulletins, ticket stubs, get-well cards (going back to high school days), and the like. Newspaper clippings and old school photos were sorted. Both of us were getting more and more depressed as we tossed away our past, uncomfortably aware that an uncertain future lay ahead.

We were almost finished when I spotted a tiny roll of paper in one of the containers. "Look at this, Charley," I said. "Here's one of Auntie York's verses."

"Well, what does Auntie have to say to us today?" he joked. Nervously I unrolled the fragile little slip of paper. Both of us were thinking, "What does *God* have to say to us?"

Standing amid the packed boxes and the debris of our move, we read together the message written by that shaky old hand many years before. It was a verse from Isaiah 55: *For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing.*

So we went to South America for eight happy years of service—buoyed up by Auntie's reminder of God's care and love. I kept that little scroll, and I still have it among my most precious treasures. If I should forget, it is there to remind me that *there is joy, and peace, and singing when we go forth with God.* Someday I hope to thank Auntie face to face! ❑

Auntie York was a member of the Advent Christian Church in Mechanic Falls, Maine. Miriam Snow Priebe and her husband, Charles, enjoy their retirement in Mechanic Falls and Gulf Streams, Fla.

Questions and Answers

with Edward Fudge

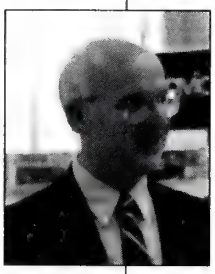
How can Paul say that he was "blameless" according to the law (Phil. 3:6), if "no one is justified by the law?" (Gal. 3:11).

Paul's comments concerning the Torah appear far less schizophrenic if one reads each relevant text with audience and intent in mind.

Paul never disputes his judgment expressed in Romans 7:12, for example, that the Law is "holy" and the commandment "holy, just, and good" (cf. 1 Tim 1:8).

Two types of righteousness

God's *intention* was for Israel to love him with all their hearts, in response to his gracious acts of salvation. And he desired that they keep his Law, graciously given as the Creator-Redeemer's loving guide and protection, in a personal relationship of love and trust (Deut. 4:1-9, 17-25; Ps. 19:7-14; Ps. 119). In that faith relationship, God viewed them as having "righteousness" (Deut. 6:25; cf. Rom. 4:3, 6). So far as the believing Israelites knew, they were forgiven and accepted by God, who is gracious, long-suffering, and forgiving and who does not deal with humans as they truly deserve (Ps. 103:10-14). We might call this "grace-faith righteousness."



Unfortunately, as humans always tend to do, many in Israel forgot or ignored God's glorious purpose for the Law and began to use it improperly—as a means of proving they were better than others, whether the Gentiles or even the "sinners" in Israel. To do this, they had to reinterpret the demands of the Law in a way that eliminated the heart requirements and which reduced the external requirements to a manageable and attainable selective list. Then they *argued* that they were "righteous" because they had kept the Law, and were better than others who had not. This is what Jesus opposes in Matthew 6-7, and what Paul fights in Galatians and somewhat in Romans. We may call this "rationalized righteousness."

When Paul viewed his pre-Christian self—that Saul who blasphemed Jesus, assisted in Stephen's execution, and "made havoc" of the church—as "blameless" (Phil. 3:6), I think he was speaking in terms of rationalized righteousness. It is the same way many of us in my particular religious background once thought of ourselves. We knew we were sinners because the Bible said so, but our doctrine allowed us to ignore that because we had kept the *important* commandments—we had been baptized, we were in the "correct" church, we "worshipped" scripturally, and were scripturally "organized." So we were "righteous" and more righteous than all those other people who could not say those same things.

But knowing Christ made all the difference—for Paul and for us! When we came to see—truly "see" with divinely-given insight (2 Cor. 4:6)—Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, we also "saw" ourselves in a different light. Now everything we had formerly trusted in was eclipsed by One who truly pleased God in every thought, word, and deed. Now all the religious achievements which made us proud became dim, dull, and even "dung" as we viewed and contemplated One who lived an entire earthly life perfectly attuned to the Creator, always acting in loving, trusting, obedient, harmonious relationship with the heavenly Father. Paul saw himself differently after he truly "saw" Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:8-11).

A change in perspective

Many of us have had the same experience. To know the gospel—that Jesus did all that he did *for* us, and that God is pleased to relate to us on the basis of Christ's performance in our stead—is to change our perspective on righteousness itself.

For Paul and for us, knowing Christ causes us to understand that even grace-faith righteousness under the Law, while as real as such righteousness since Christ, was possible because of what God had purposed previously to do in Jesus Christ. And knowing Christ reduces rationalized righteousness to dust to be blown away by the wind. That is Paul's point in Galatians 3:10-12 and such passages, texts addressed to people who deceive themselves that they are righteous because *they* have attained it.

That is the message for us today as well. The same glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus will deliver us from thinking that we can boast of anything. It will keep us from think-

ing that we (or our group) are better than others, or that God loves us more than he does them.

It's as old as Abraham but also as fresh as tomorrow—God loves his human creatures, and he still will declare "righteous" (in right standing with him) whoever will relate to him in trust and love. We may be sure that obedience will naturally and inevitably flow out of those heart attitudes, and if obedience does not come (in keeping with one's present understanding of God's requirements) there is reason to question the profession of faith.

May God lead us all higher and higher as we continue our walk with him, our gracious Creator-Redeemer, who has shown us his deepest and eternal heart toward us in the Cross and Resurrection of his only Son our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ!

In your writing on eternal security, you mentioned Reformed theology. What part do you believe God plays in our choosing Jesus and what part do we humans play?

That is a question over which much theological ink has been spilled, since at least the time of Augustine about 400 years after Christ.

The best answer I know comes from the mouth of Jesus. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. . . Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me" (John 6:44-45).

God draws and we come. Evidently we can say "No" to God unaided by any outside power. But to say "Yes" means that the One we are affirming already has his gracious hand on us and is working in us faith which we could not find in ourselves apart from him.

Praise God that he does for us what we cannot do for ourselves! Praise God that our salvation is ultimately in his strong and loving hands!

"Let us hold fast the confidence of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful!" ❑

Double

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ness effectively. But God has given us an awesome responsibility that should send each one of us to our knees.

We must be prepared for people to hate us because of our faith. But that is something entirely different from people who hate us because we are judgmental, falsely pious, or proud.

May God help us learn to love piety in such a way that it is also lovable to others. ❑

From *World* magazine, February 3, 1996. Used by permission.

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

November

1 Praise God that **Jeff and Penny Vann**, and their children, have safely arrived in the Philippines to begin their missionary service.

2 Pray that God will give **Jeff, Penny, and their children**, wisdom and strength as they adjust to life in a new culture and begin their kingdom service.

3 Praise God for the leadership that **Warren and Jackie Prestidge** continue to provide for the ministry of Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

4 Pray that students at **Oro Bible College** will know God's will and direction as they prepare to serve as pastors, as church planters, and in other forms of Christian service.

5 Praise God for the effective ministry that **David Vignali** continues to have as he handles many responsibilities for Advent Christian missions in the Philippines.

6 Pray that God will give courage and wisdom to **Filipino Advent Christian pastors** in their service for him.

7 Praise God for the church-planting ministry that **Steve and Ann Lay** continue to have in the greater Kobe area of Japan.

8 Pray for **Karen Rigney** as she does deputation work in New England while home on furlough from Japan.

9 Praise God for new ministry opportunities for **Russell and Noelle Carle** in New Zealand.

10 Pray that **Russell, Noelle, and their children** will know God's presence and strength in a special way during the upcoming holiday season.

11 Praise God for the continued ministry that **Marion Damon** and **Barbara White** continue to perform for Advent Christian missions in India.

12 Pray that God would raise up Advent Christian missionaries for our fields in **India** and **Honduras**.

13 Praise God that **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** are seeing lives touched by Jesus Christ as they serve in the inner city of Memphis, Tennessee.

14 Pray that the Holy Spirit will work through the ministries of Advent Christian pastors and congregations involved in **ethnic and urban ministry**.

15 Praise God that he has restored Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** to good health following his heart surgery earlier this year.

16 Pray that God would give **Rev. Patterson** wisdom and discernment as he provides leadership for the worldwide outreach of Advent Christian missions.

17 Praise God for Mexican national students who continue to prepare for Christian service at **Tecate Bible Institute**.

18 Pray for Advent Christian church planters active in two communities in the Baja California region of Mexico—**Joel and Omega Garcia**, and **Mario and Elena Cortez**.

19 Praise God for the continuing cooperative relationship between Advent Christian missions and **Mexican Medical Mission**.

20 Pray that God will continue to raise up work teams from Advent Christian congregations for **short-term missions trips** to Mexico, Honduras, and other locations.

21 Praise God for the growth of the new Advent Christian congregation in **Zagreb, Croatia**.

22 Pray that God will give strength and encouragement to **Desirée Ahola**, our Advent Christian church planter in Croatia.

23 Praise God for the opportunity that an Advent Christian short-term missions team will have to travel to **Nigeria and Ghana** next month for ministry opportunities with Advent Christians in those countries.

24 Pray for the three members of that team, **Frank Jewett**, **Aloysius Okon**, and **Harold ("Hap") Turner** as they prepare to leave for West Africa in the next few days.

25 Praise God for **your pastoral family** and their ministry.

26 Pray that as **your pastor** provides leadership for your congregation, God will provide wisdom, protection, and spiritual strength.

27 As we enter the holiday season, praise God that he has expressed his **mercy and grace** toward us through the person of Jesus Christ.

28 Pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to convict women and men **throughout the world** of their sin and their need for Jesus Christ.

29 Praise God for new Director of Church Relations **Richard Russell** and the ministry that he is already having among Advent Christians.

30 Pray that God would use Advent Christian people and congregations to provide for the **United Ministries needs** of Advent Christian ministry throughout the world.

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to the growing movement toward assisted suicide, both within medicine and within law?

Well, we must respond. The situation with our national debt and the issues of health care reform will require a Christian response to these issues. How will we respond to the question of what to do with limited health-care dollars, advancing technology, and families that lack good support systems? Churches will have to practice proactive Christianity on this one. We're going to have to stand by the bedside of our hurting loved one and give good reasons as to why it is a compassionate thing not to swallow a bottle of pills.

Compassion is not found through lethal injection. That practice is simply abandonment. Compassion is played out with the holding of the hand and assisting with financial aid. It's played out through prayer, alleviating the suffering, and by bringing that person out of social isolation. It's tough for us to remain isolated on this issue, because it's going to hit all of us as Christians. Each of us will get a bad medical diagnosis at some point in our lives. People in your church will have to face the question, "Should I have my wife go on a ventilator, or shouldn't I?"

What ethical framework will they have to make a decision that pleases the Lord? Scripture is not silent on this issue. In fact, I think it's clear on the issue. The church must not merely preach against euthanasia, it's going to have to be at the bedside of suffering people. If a woman who is depressed about her diagnosis of multiple sclerosis wants to write Jack Kevorkian, the church had better give her an alternative. The church had better say to her, "Wait a minute. We've got a core of volunteers here who would love to assist you with your respite care, who would love to assist you with housekeeping chores. If you need transportation, let's see what we can arrange with our deacons' committee."

The church must do this because the despair and depression people face with these circumstances has to do with the daily demands and struggles related to the disability or illness. I have a part-time team of seven women who assist me during the week, and I'm so blessed. That's such a precious resource to me, those seven individuals, but that little bit of help from each person, a couple of hours in the morning, enables me to live independently. And there are, I know, many individuals who don't even have that help, because their church just is not willing to practice that kind of Christianity with sleeves rolled up. So if we're going to preach against euthanasia and articulate a choose-life perspective, we're going to have to be at the bedside, giving alternatives and creative solutions to the pain.

One more question. We live in a time when ma-

chines and technology have made so much possible, and we read about people having life prolonged by artificial means. Is there a point where technology artificially prolongs life longer than God's intent?

I think so. But I wouldn't call it artificially prolonged life. I would say that it's artificially prolonging the process of dying. I think it's highly appropriate to pull the plug when you're doing nothing but prolonging the process of dying. It's the patient's right to decline, let's say chemotherapy when in weighing the pain level and the outcome level, they discover the chemotherapy will extend their life an extra two weeks.

There comes a point where every person has the right to say, "no more." The real issue here is the difference between what is extraordinary treatment, and what is ordinary treatment. Because what is now ordinary treatment was extraordinary twenty-five years ago. And what is now extraordinary treatment is what you're asking about, the high-tech doodads that do nothing but keep your heart pumping and your lungs breathing, so that all you're doing is prolonging the process of dying, let's say, a couple of extra weeks. That can be more burdensome, it can add more suffering. Former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, who is in his seventies now, has said that if he went into renal failure, he wouldn't go on dialysis. He looks at his age, he weighs the discomfort level, and the cost; he thinks of the benefits that might be accrued by going on dialysis. And based on that, Dr. Koop has decided that he would not go on dialysis. For a man in his mid-seventies whose circulatory system is failing anyway, it's not ordinary treatment. It would be an extraordinary measure for him. It's like a man who's a diabetic at age ninety going through radical limb surgery. For him, that's extraordinary application of a procedure, whereas for a seventeen-year-old, radical limb surgery is not extraordinary.

There are all kinds of variables. Age, health condition, severity of the disability, the availability of the medical treatment, even the fact of living in a rural area. There are all kinds of factors. So there are no pat, one-two-three step, easy answers. Everybody's different. But to get to the bottom line, I do think there are many times when we artificially prolong the process of dying—not the sustaining of life, but the process of dying. ❑

Challenges continued from page 6

technology for relief and development purposes.

What then shall we do in the future? I do not have any startling new revelations, but I do have some old ones that gave our missionary heroes and heroines their missionary vision and passion, and kept them going when times were tough. We need more persistent, disciplined, and intelligent prayer. By that I mean, not just "Lord, bless our dear missionaries," but specific prayer in light of some of the things I've mentioned. You see these things on TV and read about them in newspapers and magazines. Make the connection and pray. Pray for your missionaries. Pray for Christ's resurrection power to be released in these situations, and pray for your pastors and fellow believers in these countries.

We need more intelligent, planned, sacrificial giving for world missions. In our churches, we need regular study of 2 Corinthians, for example, so we can all be Macedonian Christians who begged for the privilege of giving. We need to sharply increase our giving for world evangelization.

We shall always need more people who hear God's call, like Isaiah did, and ask God to send them into his world mission. Our God is a sending, saving God. He will not stop. But in some unexplainable way, he needs us. "Who will go for us?" was the question asked in heaven that Isaiah heard. Who indeed? There is no age limit today. God needs all of us. Despite all of these challenges, Christians called and empowered by God can still make a difference for Christ, the gospel, and the church.

How shall we defeat these challenges? In the power of the Lamb, in the power of his blood. "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." Think about that wonderful blessing for a minute in light of what we've been talking about. What chance does the Lamb have against these innumerable, powerful foes? Don't we wish we had something better with which to meet these massive challenges? All we have is a Lamb, and a slain Lamb at that.

Power, wealth, wisdom, might, honor, glory, and blessing. These are the things people all over the world want. But they all belong to our Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. As we honor our friends tonight, we honor the Lamb who made it all possible. As we look to our future, we do so with full confidence in our Lamb. We must never lose sight of him.

When the first Moravian missionaries set out from Germany in the 1740s, they had no modern tools of evangelism. They faced strong resistance and they were discouraged. But their leader, Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf, told them not to be discouraged. He told them not to try to convert people by arguments. Preach the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, he said. They did, and people were converted to Christ. Zinzendorf himself traced his conversion from nominal faith to personal faith to a look at a famous painting of the crucified Lamb. We must never lose sight of the Lamb of God.

Hunger, poverty, suffering, oppression? Listen to this: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd." ❑

Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
Box 17 Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Marion Damon (March 27)
Box 17 Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Warren Prestidge
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Margaret Helms (September 18)
3612 Brief Rd. E.
Monroe, NC 28110

Jeff and Penny Vann
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-794-62-8744

Karen Rigney (June 5)
c/o Emmanuel A.C. Church
P.O. Box 1812
Rochester, NH 03866-1812

New Zealand

Russell and Noelle Carle
(December 30 and December 19)
(Ryan, November 15, 1979)
(Emily, June 23, 1983)
(Peter, August 14, 1991)
51 Brylee Dr.
Conifer Grove
Auckland 1702
NEW ZEALAND

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
Bududuram Refugee Camp
National Mobilization Program
Box 46
Accra, GHANA

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

China
Our pastor in China
All correspondence should be channelled through the missions office.

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devadason
Beulah Margaret Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Croatia

Desirée Ahola
c/o Advent Christian Croatia Ministry
Bozidar Magovca 44/7 Kat.
Trund 10000 Zagreb
Croatia – Europe

Mexico

Carlos Quintero
387 W. Poppyfields Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
(818) 791-2447

Mario and Elena Cortez
Joel and Omega Garcia
Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Carlos Quintero

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Vice-president
Harold Patterson; World Missions
Millie Griswold; Resource Development

P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

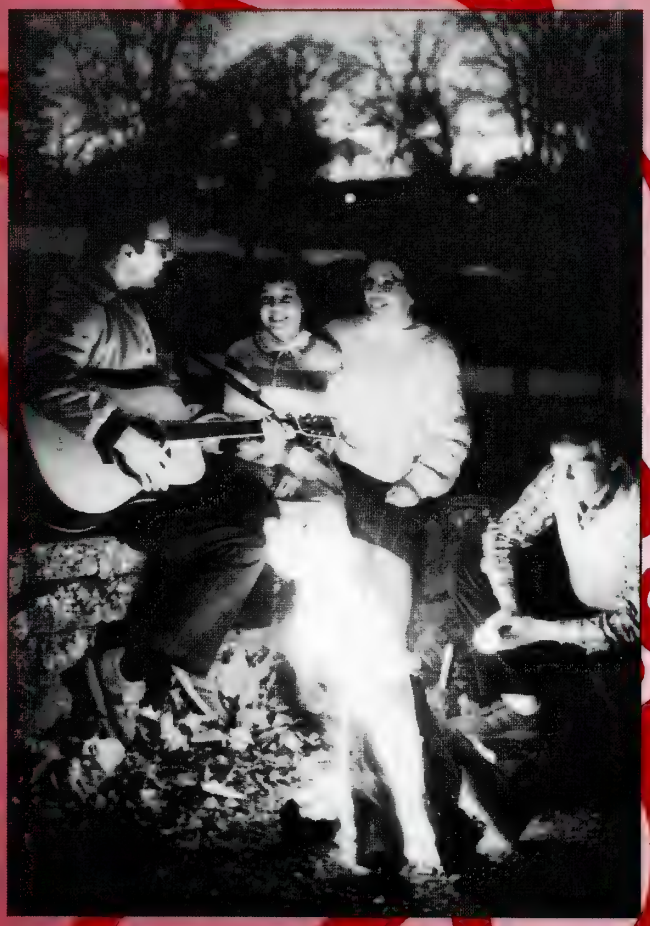
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Advent Christian WITNESS

November 1996



Christmas: How do we celebrate the birth of our Lord?

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How does the way you celebrate Christmas influence your children and grandchildren? Marcy Alves suggests several ways your Christmas celebration can draw your family closer to our living Lord—Jesus Christ.

God's Gift-Bearers • David Alves

Celebrating Christ at Christmas 8

How can we make Jesus the focus of our family Christmas celebrations? Marlo Schalesky offers some helpful ideas.

The Most Important Story of All • Carl Rundgren

America's "Finding Fathers" 10

Laurel Turner suggests that we can practice disciplemaking in both church and home by using seven strategies that we find throughout the pages of the New Testament.

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On the Cover

In this issue, we focus on ways that you can make the celebration of Christ's birth meaningful for your family.

photo by Jim Whitmer Photography

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Editor **Robert Mayer** Student Intern **Dawn Rutan**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy,**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria



Christian Faith With a Personal Touch

MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT of Jesus' birth contains a passage that gets at the heart of Christmas for me: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel'—which means 'God with us'" (Matthew 1:22-23). It's the same idea that John drives home when he writes, "The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

What Matthew and John teach in these passages not only sets the Christian faith apart from all other religions and ideologies, but helps us see that being a Christian is much more than following a moral or ethical code, or practicing a set of religious customs or church rituals.

God chose to reveal himself to us not through codes, customs, or rituals; but through a person.

The Christian faith focuses on a person—Jesus Christ. God chose to reveal himself to us not through codes, customs, or rituals; but through a person. If we want to know what God is like, all we have to do is look at Jesus.

Jesus is not merely a religious teacher like the Hindu Upanishads, the Buddha, or Mohammed. Within Jesus, we find the very nature and essence of God. When the disciple Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father, Jesus responded with these words, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). The apostle Paul writes that Jesus, "being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" (Philippians 2:6-7).

Knowing God

The holiday season does not simply mark the birth of a good man or a great religious teacher. The birth of Jesus Christ demonstrates the reality of Matthew's words, "Immanuel—which means 'God with us.'" Through Jesus, we see what God is like. We see God's justice, mercy, love, indeed all of God's character expressed through the life of Jesus.

That brings great comfort, joy, and hope to me. Celebrating Christmas reminds me that my allegiance is not to a political ideology, a moral code, or a set of customs. It's to a person—Jesus Christ. Christmas also reminds me that through Jesus, God identifies with the struggles we face as we live. We have a God who can identify with the physical, emotional, and spiritual struggles we face.

Christmas also helps me reflect about how easily we find it to limit God's grace. The birth of Jesus reminds us that no sin or struggle we face is too big for God. His mercy and forgiveness is available for the asking, no matter what our race, our family background, or our economic status. Jesus invites us toward repentance. Then, he invites us to allow his grace to work in our daily lives.

Paul captured that so well in his letter to the church at Rome, and I love the way that Eugene Peterson paraphrases it. "So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him" (Romans 12:1-2, *The Message*).

As he began his ministry, Jesus declared, "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15). Christmas is another reminder of that good news. We don't have to settle for the misery of sin. Instead, we can be overcomers as we discover the hope of God's grace expressed in the person of Jesus Christ. ❑



Christmas Traditions that Teach Our Children

Marcy Alves
Concord, N.H.

THE OLD AXIOM may sound trite, but it's painfully true that "A picture is worth a thousand words." We are painting pictures every day with our lives. How we act and react in front of children results in mental image reinforcing mental image, day after day, year after year. What we *say* often cannot be heard because of what we *do* and how we do it.

What kind of permanent images are you impressing on your children? What kind of "stuff" for tomorrow is filtering into their minds today?

They learn through a song on the radio that Santa Claus is omniscient: "He sees you when you're sleeping; he knows when you're awake; he knows when you've been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake!" But do they also know that God is omniscient, and that it is far more important what he sees in our lives than what a fictional character sees?

How do you handle yourselves during the Christmas season? Are you harried, rushed, short-tempered, neglectful of your family and your spiritual responsibilities? Do you withhold gifts all year but give more than you can afford at Christmas?

A little girl was asked, "Did you get all you wanted for Christmas?" She replied wisely, "No, but then, it's not my birthday." Have you carefully instructed your children about whose birthday Christmas really is? We need to remember whose birthday we are celebrating and remind others of that truth. We need to focus on Jesus because this day is a remembrance of his birth—God come in the flesh. We need to teach our young people by word and example that we give to Jesus on his birthday.

How can you successfully place Christ back into the center of the Christmas celebration? It may take a great deal of effort to correct old, ingrained habits, but the rewards will be great as you find your energy and enthusiasm increasing instead of dissipating during the holiday season.

Here are some valuable tips to aid you as you reinvest the Christmas season with awe for our wonderful Savior; as you teach your children how to celebrate the incarnation—the coming of God to earth.

1. Set realistic prices on gifts. Refuse to go into debt to satisfy your child's every whim. At Christmas, keep individual gifts to family members at one or two each.

2. Emphasize that Christmas is a time for *giving*, not getting. For your child's own birthday, plan a special day with lots of presents, activities, and individual time. This will set the stage for doing the same for Jesus on his birthday.

During the year, buy the things your children are asking for in the way of clothes (both necessities and luxuries) as you can afford them, and give them to the kids *before* Christmas. Each time you buy them something, explain that Christmas time will be time for giving to Jesus. Set them up for it—create excitement and expectation by the following:

a. Save money in a special bank all year for a Christmas gift for Jesus. Have everyone in the family contribute toward this gift, or have each family member save in their own private bank, and give the gifts on Christmas either to your church or to a particular mission or para-church organization.

b. Have your kids write an accompanying letter or card explaining how they saved all year toward this gift for Jesus and his work.

3. Teach your kids how to be generous toward Jesus in sacrificial ways:

a. As a family, help serve a meal in a soup kitchen on Christmas Day.

b. Let the kids help to make and serve a special Christmas meal in your own home to which you invite homeless people, or neighbors who have no place to go for the holiday, or people from your church who have no family in the area.

c. Go to visit someone in a nursing home or in a hospital on Christmas Day.

4. While they are still young, teach your children to select a few gifts *before opening them* which they will then give to a less fortunate child. We have some good friends who did that very thing with their young child, and it was a joy for him to share with others.

5. Encourage your child to make gifts. Have the whole family make their Christmas gifts for others. Set

next page

God's Gift-Bearers

David C. Alves
Concord, N.H.

THROUGH A Christian relief organization, Marcy and I sponsor an eleven-year-old boy—Francisco Luiz Alves (no relation)—in Brazil. I have a small gift for Francisco that needs to be mailed. As I look at that envelope sitting here on my desk, several things cross my mind. First I realize that the gift may not arrive in time for Christmas because of my procrastination. The organization suggested that I mail my gift by the last week in November. Today is the 5th of December.

I am also thinking about all the hands this gift will have to pass through to get to Brazil; how many trucks, planes, boats, postal buildings, canvas bags, perhaps a bicycle or two—all to get the gift to its intended recipient (or to prevent it from arriving at all). I pray that the Lord will oversee the transport of the gift and cause it to arrive to Francisco in time for Christmas, despite my tardiness.

None of us really understands why it is that God in his omniscience and wisdom chooses to include us in his generosity to others, but the truth is that he does.

These thoughts lead me to think of something else: *God* desires each one of us to receive certain gifts. Matthew 7:11 says, *"If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"* And God purposes them to arrive at just the right time. Yet, he uses imperfect people who are being made holy like you and me as the transporters of his blessings, human instruments to deliver heaven's gifts. *"If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work"* (2 Tim. 2:21) and *"I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—"* (Rom. 1:11).

Then I think this thought: how many times has God meant to bless someone else through us, with a word of encouragement or counsel, a smile, an understanding touch, help with finances, a listening ear? And how many times have I not been spiritually sensitive enough to notice the need? Worse yet, how many times have I known that God wanted to use me to meet someone's need and instead procrastinated, then forgot altogether the errand he instructed me to carry out? How many times have you, perhaps not meaning to do so, delayed, procrastinated, or blocked someone's gift from the Lord...the gift he wanted to send through you?

None of us really understands why it is that God in his omniscience and wisdom chooses to include us in his generosity to others, but the truth is that he does. Are we sensitive to this grand truth, or are we preventing his blessings and gifts from getting through? Our heavenly Father has chosen us to be his "gift-bearers" to one another and to a lost world. What better time to meditate on this great biblical truth than during this year's Christmas season.

I'm always so thankful that God's greatest gift, Jesus, came right on time.

next page

down ahead of time—say in September or October—and decide together what gifts the family will make and to whom they will be given. Have a gift-wrapping night for these handmade gifts when the whole family does wrapping together (except for those prepared for family members who are present at the time).

6. Create a festive atmosphere during the two weeks before Christmas in preparation for the big celebration. Plan time for fun things together, like a special musical, play, or movie with the Christmas theme (i.e., *A Christmas Carol, Miracle on 34th Street, It's a Wonderful Life*, etc.). Make a huge family bowl of popcorn.

How can you successfully place Christ back into the center of the Christmas celebration?

7. Bake cookies for neighbors, service people (the postman, garbage collector, etc.), and shut-ins, considering such things as dietary limitations, as those of diabetics.

8. Send a monetary gift to a Christian organization that deals with world or national hunger, housing for the homeless, etc., in the name of someone on your list who is hard to buy for. Have your children write a card to the person in whose name you made the gift, explaining what your family did in that person's name.

9. When entertaining guests during the holiday season, emphasize praise and worship of Christ through singing, sharing testimonies, special prayer times, reading (Scriptures or stories with the Christmas theme), and intentionally focusing on Jesus' coming to earth.

10. Help your children look forward to the season, without gifts to them being the focus of their attention. Give special privileges during the holidays, such as taking turns lighting the Advent candles; late nights watching videos together or doing a fun activity with friends; joining with other families to attend to special events or exhibits; an evening of driving around to see Christmas lights; or caroling to neighbors or shut-ins in convalescence facilities.

Realize that if your children are already older, the re-education will take time and work. If you do it joyfully, they will soon enter into that joy. Both parents must be equally enthusiastic about it. Encourage your children to ask their friends to join them for some of the occasions.

Share these ideas with other families in your church, with your extended family and with your close circle of friends. It would be very encouraging and helpful to the cause of a Christ-filled Christmas if your kids can see others doing similar sacrificial, life-instructive things during the Advent season.

Ask God to help you to come up with creative ideas for your own family with its own special needs. Keep the themes of "joy" and "praise" in your thoughts, speech, actions, and activities during the Christmas season, for God himself inhabits the praises of his people. ❑

Marcy Devers Alves is a graduate of Philadelphia College of the Bible and is a popular speaker at conferences, women's retreats, Women's Aglow, and Christian Women's Clubs on the East Coast and in New England. She and her husband, David, are serving at New Life Fellowship, an Advent Christian congregation in Concord, N.H.

Gift-Bearers from page 5

Right on time for a dark world, for dying sinners—for you and me. I am also thankful that his human "gift-bearers," Mary and Joseph, cooperated with their heavenly Father's desire to bless others through them. We all should meditate on and then follow their example of faith, obedience, and cooperation with the will of God.

Let us make a decision today. Let's covenant together with the Holy Spirit to, with his help, never miss another of his divine appointments (Eph. 2:10). Let us purpose in our hearts to be faithful "gift-bearers" of the life of Jesus to one another and to this gift-starved world.

I have an envelope that needs to be mailed right away. I've learned a valuable lesson this season. I pray that it's not too late for Francisco's gift to arrive by Christmas. ❑

David Alves is a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and is studying under Ralph Neighbor, Jr. toward his doctor of ministry degree in "Cell-Church Leadership and Church Revitalization" at Regent University in Virginia Beach. He is currently serving as senior pastor of New Life Fellowship, an Advent Christian cell-church in Concord, N.H.

If There is no Christmas

—Miriam Snow Priebe

December's cold is biting:
No pealing bells bring cheer!
No holiday exciting
The children we hold dear!
No gifts, no songs, this year,
If there is no Christmas!

No need to wrap the gifts up.
No dashing to the store.
No tinsel on the carpet.
No wreath adorns the door.
That flurry is no more,
If there is no Christmas!

No glorious angel chorus—
No shepherds hear them say
That there is peace on earth for us.
No need to kneel and pray!
No Baby in the hay,
If there is no Christmas!

No Savior in the manger—
No Lord in Galilee,
No healing, teaching, Son of Man
No Cross of Calvary!
No Easter joy to be,
If there is no Christmas!

Questions and Answers

with Edward Fudge

A 20-year-old writes, "I have trouble keeping up the discipline to read my Bible and to pray daily. Church attendance is never a problem but that by itself doesn't make a relationship with God. I struggle with this, and I always backslide. It makes me think I've never been saved. Sometimes I think that if I just got rebaptized things would get better, but I don't know if that would help. What can you recommend?"

You speak for almost all of us who, at one time or another in our walk with Christ, find our holy desires outpacing our performance. Even the apostle Paul found himself in that situation whenever he tried to do right in his own strength (Rom. 7:18-24).



Don't let Satan steal your assurance of salvation because of your natural frailty! I assume that you struggle against lethargy because you truly wish to develop intimacy with God, and that is not something an unregenerate person desires (Rom. 8:5). You need not doubt your position in Christ, therefore, if you are truly depending on his finished work to stand you right with God. Continue to trust God's gospel promise that Jesus died and rose for you personally. We walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). Our salvation depends on God's faithfulness, which never changes, not on our feelings, which are notoriously unstable (1 John 3:20).

I encourage you to take the matter to God in open, honest prayer. Tell him what you wish to do (which we know is according to his will), and ask him to energize you by his Holy Spirit every day to desire to read the Bible and to pray, and also to do it. "Present" your body to God each new day as an instrument for his use. God will work in you by his Spirit to answer such prayers as you yield yourself to his leading (Phil. 2:13); Rom. 6:13). Ask him to fill you with his Spirit and to give you a "willing" spirit (Psalm 51:10). Be sure you are not harboring any unconfessed sin in your life, which always erects a barrier between us and God in our heart and keeps us from truly seeking his face (Psalm 32:5-7).

Do you have a Bible translation in modern English? If not, I encourage you to purchase one. The New International Version is excellent for reading with understanding. Find a time when you are unrushed and undisturbed. Some people read or pray in the early morning, others late at night, others while driving to or from work each day. Never give up. Any discipline requires commitment and persistence, including spiritual discipline. Remember that twenty-one days of daily repetition usually creates a new habit—in this case, two very constructive ones.

You are right not to think that being baptized again would solve the problem. Baptism is the way Jesus gave new believers to publicly express their faith and to "take sides" with him against an unbelieving world (Matt. 28:18-20), but it does not instantly take us to spiritual maturity. On the other hand, if you were not entrusting yourself to Jesus as your own Savior and Lord when you were baptized before, you might have unfinished business and rebaptism might be in order.

Your goal is an ever-deepening personal relationship with God and with Jesus Christ. Personal relationships take time. They require fellowship and communication. As you walk with Christ in honesty and openness each day, you will increasingly come to know his presence in your own life (John 14:23; James 4:8; Rev. 3:20).

A brother who has read *The Fire that Consumes* inquired about the state of believers after the moment of death and before the resurrection at the Last Day, the period sometimes called "the intermediate state."

If one begins thinking at the point of biblical anthropology, it seems to me one easily concludes that there is no conscious "intermediate state." In the creation story, God makes a mud man (body) into which he breathes the "breath of life" (spirit/breath) and

continued on page 11



Celebrating Christ at Christmas

Marlo M. Schalesky
Gilroy, Calif.

SANTA CLAUS, mistletoe, jingle bells, spray-on snow.

Colored lights, shopping sprees, a star atop the Christmas tree.

Amidst all the holiday festivities, the most significant event in all history waits to be remembered and celebrated—the incarnation; God became man and dwelt among us; Jesus was born of a virgin in Bethlehem, a birth that changed the world.

But, if yours is like most families, the celebration of Christ's birth can be lost in all the last minute shopping, wrapping, and family get-togethers, until the traditions that we pass on to our children become no more than hurry, worry, brightly-colored packages, and fruitcake that no one will eat.

How can we make Jesus the focus of our family's Christmas celebrations? How can we forego the trappings of the secular holiday without losing the fun and frolic of the season? Here are some ideas from families who have successfully created warm and wonderful Christmas traditions that center around the celebration of Christ's birth:

Throw a birthday party for Jesus

Every kid loves a party. So, each Christmas my brother's family throws a birthday party for Jesus. The gala event is complete with cake, ice cream, party hats, streamers, and games. The whole family sings "Happy Birthday" to Jesus, and someone blows out the candles with a prayer that each family member will grow closer to Jesus over the Christmas holidays. Then, like the wise men, each one presents a birthday gift to Jesus. The young children often present a picture they have drawn, or something they've made in Sunday school. Older children can give a gift of a certain number of hours helping an elderly member of the church, or bringing a baked treat to another family, or mowing the lawn, or cleaning the garage. Adults may want to give the gift of a special time alone with Jesus, reading Scripture, praying, and praising him. After the gifts are presented, they are opened and shared with the family. Then, each person commits to helping the others fulfill their gifts to Jesus. The party continues with games that focus on the manger scene (i.e. "put baby Jesus in the manger," a variation of "pin the tail on the donkey") and the singing of Christmas carols. Whenever I ask my nieces and nephews what Christmas is, they excitedly respond, "It's Jesus' birthday!"

Make your nativity set central to your Christmas decorations

Kids love to play with figurines and make up stories. When a friend of mine was growing up, her family always had a nativity set that was durable enough for play. With the manger scene as the focus of their Christmas decorations, she was al-

ways reminded that they were celebrating Christ's birth, not simply a tree with gifts underneath. To call more attention to the nativity, they enjoyed making up names and personal histories for each figurine. Then, they played out the Christmas story, and each family member told how Jesus' birth affected the life of his / her figurine. Some stories were funny, while others were serious. Afterward, her parents would open a discussion for each person to share how Jesus' birth changed their own lives. Her mother wrote down what was shared, and over the years, they developed a Christmas journal that charted the spiritual journey of each one. Re-reading the stories told when they were young children has brought countless hours of laughter, along with priceless memories of Christmases centered on Christ's birth.

Making a family gallery of Christmas drawings

Nothing is more fun than crayons and paper—ask any kid! Several families in our church put their colors to work in family drawing parties. Each family member draws a scene from the Christmas story (shepherds in the field, Joseph and Mary traveling to Bethlehem, the manger scene, the wise men), using crayons, markers, felt, glued-on sticks, etc. After writing their names and ages on the front, the pictures are used as Christmas decorations. Some families save the pictures each year to make a gallery of colored drawings of the birth of Christ. A few have enough to cover whole walls. Another family in our town paints a huge mural on their front window of the manger scene, or the angels appearing to the shepherds, or the star above the stable. Each year the scene is accompanied by a saying such as, "Jesus is the reason for the season," "For unto us a child is born," or "Emmanuel, God with us."

Focus on the story of Christ's birth

Ah, there's nothing like snuggling

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The Most Important "Story" of All

Carl Rundgren
Northwood, N.H.

MANY PEOPLE are content to think of the events of Jesus' birth as just a story. A good number assume that parts of the story were made up by over-zealous followers. Others are willing to say that most of the events actually happened, but they are not willing to concede that those events mean what the Bible says they mean. Such folks see value in the teaching of Jesus, but not in his claims.

Those of us who know Jesus, however, see the events in a more brilliant light. That light is found especially in a verse of Scripture most people have heard since childhood. John 3:16 states, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes on him shall not perish but have everlasting life."* The events of the Christmas story, when placed under the spotlight of this verse, confront us with certain truths that touch the heart of man's need, and show the Christmas story to be the most important "story" of all.

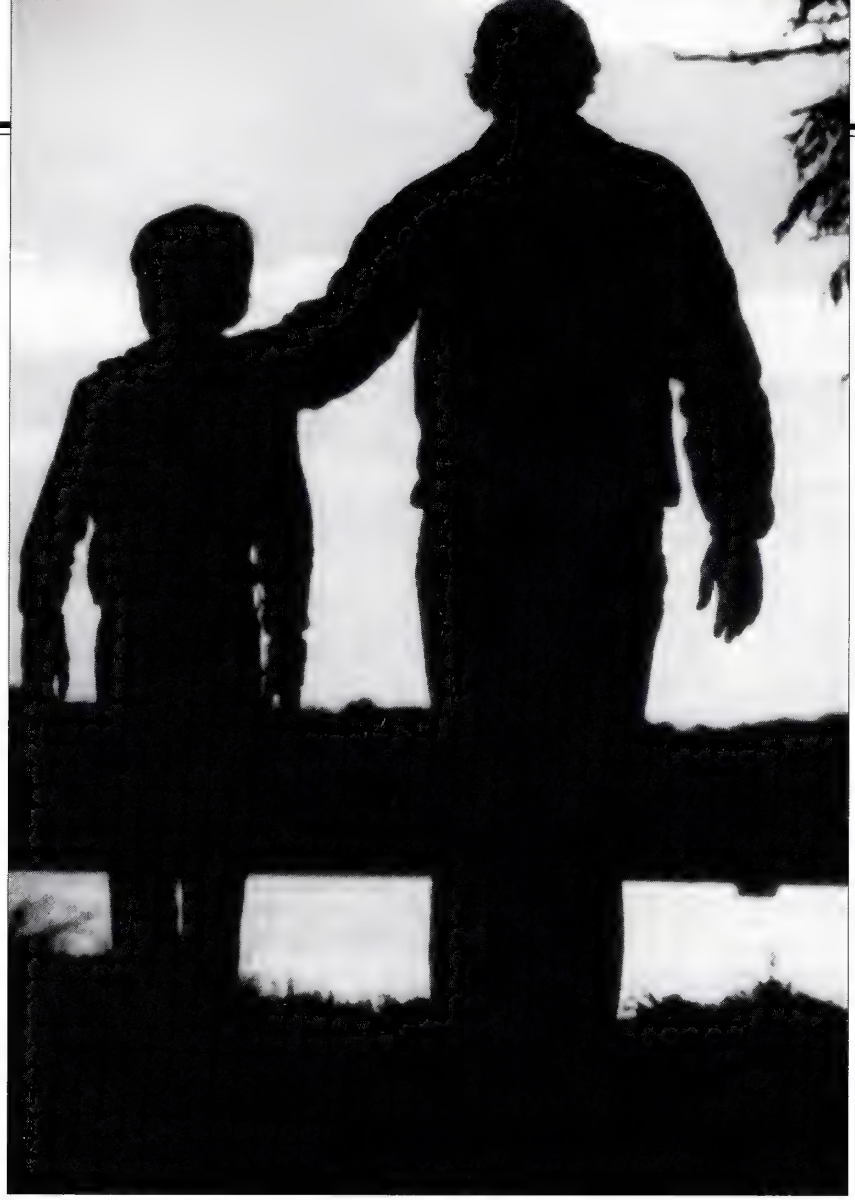
First, God made the initial move toward spanning the great gulf that separates man from him. God, not man, is the subject of this verse. Since man is a sinner—and there is ample proof of that statement wherever we look—man is not inclined to reach out to God. When he does, he is often content to reach out to a god of his own making, made after man's image. If the gulf between man and God is to be spanned, God must act first. The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem was God reaching out to man. Indeed, it was God becoming flesh and dwelling among us!

Second, God's love for us is the motive behind Jesus' coming into the world. God has no ulterior motives in loving us, nor is there anything we can offer that will sway God's opinion of us and make us recipients of his love. It is unconditional love that moved God to send Jesus into the world. It is unconditional love that reveals God's love to us.

Third, belief—faith or trust—in Jesus Christ is the only response to God's love that gives us life. Once we understand that God loves us, we must respond to his love. We can either run away, pretend it does not exist, or cast our lives upon him in gratitude. We cannot, however, be unresponsive. Only the response of trust guarantees life with God. Any combination of other responses is insufficient.

Lastly, the consequences of not trusting Jesus Christ are severe. The word, *perish,* is a strong word. Its primary meaning is destroy, and that is a frightful prospect. That makes the Christmas story a life or death issue. He who treats it as a great folktale will perish in his unbelief. Ask the Lord to make the story plain to your heart, however, and he will transform your life.

This final point has another side to it. Not only does the prospect of judgment hopefully motivate those who are lost to call upon God; it also should motivate those of us who know Jesus to proclaim the love of God. There are many who, for want of Christ, are headed for total destruction who could hear the Good News from our lips. How will they hear unless someone tells them? Please tell them! ❑



America's "Finding Fathers"

Seven disciplemaking strategies for church and home

Laurel Turner
Bothell, Wash.

"TIMMY!" I cried in an unusually vigorous voice the morning our electricity went out, "Why is there milk all over our front porch?"

"What's wrong, Mama?" My four-year-old innocently looked up at me, "You told me to put the milk out on the porch."

"So I did, Son." I laughed in spite of myself.

Timmy wondered what was so funny. I wondered when I would get the knack of this parenting thing. I console myself by thinking that I'm learning valuable lessons that I can pass on to students of all ages. But how can we help others grow up in God? Let's look at seven strategies that Jesus and other early church leaders have used to disciple believers.

1. Relationship. Jesus, first of all, had a relationship with his disciples. He traveled with them; ate with them; and lodged with them. He invested his life in them because he loved them. The apostle Paul writes, "Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us" (1 Thess. 2:8). "In Christ Jesus," he writes to the Corinthians, "I became your father through the gospel." He said that they had ten thousand instructors, but few fathers (1 Cor. 4:15). We need to disciple others because they have "become very dear to us."

2. Example. Jesus' second discipleship strategy—example—goes along with relationship. If you fellowship with your disciples, you can set an example for them. When Jesus wanted his disciples to serve each other, he washed their feet. Paul encouraged believers to follow him as he followed Christ. Peter tells leaders to be examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:3). Jesus only did what he saw his Father doing.

Surely we have found our children more influenced by our example than our lectures. Surely David produced "giant-killers" among his men because he was a "giant-killer," while Saul's men followed his example, and cowered in their tents. David's bold example was the fruit of his intimate relationship with his Lord. The Bible says that those who know their God will be strong and do exploits (Daniel 11:32).

3. Service. Service is the third discipleship strategy which Jesus used. He said that there is no greater love than to lay down our lives for our friends (John 15:13). He gave his life for us, teaching us to do the same for those we would influence. We find leaders throughout the Bible who sacrificed to serve others. Joshua served Moses. Elisha served Elijah. And it is said that King David served his generation.

4. Prayer. One of the most important things we can do for others is to pray for them—our fourth discipleship strategy. Jesus prayed for his disciples and taught them how to pray. Paul, David, and Moses all prayed for their followers. Our churches are to be "houses of prayer" following the example of the early church in Acts: "When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31). James tells us that it is fervent prayer which transforms ordinary men like Elijah into rain-stopping, king-confronting, conquerors. Since Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us (Rom. 8:34), we should pray for others.

5. Encouragement. Another way to help disciples is to instill in them "courage and confidence of success"—encouragement is our fifth discipleship strategy. Leaders can encourage their disciples by helping them see their potential in Christ. Jesus encouraged Peter to do the impossible and come to him on the water. He encouraged all of his disciples to "move mountains" and do the works that he did. Paul assured believers that they could do all things through Christ (Phil. 4:13). Many a father has encouraged his toddler that she really could take those first few steps.

The Bible says that without a vision people perish. David had a detailed vision as he ran toward his opponent. He confidently shouted, "This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head" (1 Sam. 17:46). Fathers play a major role in encouraging their children to develop a positive vision that will help them, like Moses, to persevere in seeing him who is invisible (Heb. 11:27).

6. Correction. Once disciples have a vision, leaders can help them stay on course by our sixth discipleship strategy—correction. Jesus corrected Peter more than once. Paul told the Corinthians, "I made you sorry with a letter" (2 Cor. 7:8). Solomon writes, "...For whom the Lord loves he corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights" (Prov. 3:12).

7. Teaching. Teaching, our last discipleship strategy, can help prevent believers from being destroyed because of lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). "Jesus went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing all manner of sickness..." (Matt. 4:23). Paul said the gospel is God's power unto salvation. As we teach the Word, the Holy Spirit will confirm it with signs.

Respect. We can remember our strategies by the acronym RESPECT: Relationship, Example, Service, Prayer, Encouragement, Correction, and Teaching. Seven disciplemaking strategies that we can use not only in church when we disciple new believers, but at home with our children.

When I was still pregnant with Isaac, Timmy said, "Mommy, open your mouth real big." Then he cupped his hands around his little lips and shouted, "H-E-L-L-O baby!" This is a new approach. We'll keep working with him. After all, Timmy will most likely one day be a father himself with the opportunity to disciple his own children. ❑

Questions from page 7

the creature becomes a "living soul." Genesis uses the same expressions "breath of life" and "living souls" when talking about animals as well as humans.

There is no hint in Genesis (or most of the rest of the Bible) that people *have* a soul which is the *"real"* person and which automatically survives the death of the body. That is a notion which came from the pagan Greek philosophers, chiefly Plato, and which infiltrated early Christianity a century or two after Christ. For the biblical writers, the human creature is inherently *mortal*, and is totally dependent on God for existence at all times. One who has this biblical understanding would not automatically assume that there is any conscious intermediate state, but rather would think that "when you die, you're dead." That is not the end, however, because God will raise the dead—some for eternal life, some for condemnation and the second death.

To be fair, there are a few Pauline texts, such as 2 Cor. 5:1-8 and Phil. 1:21-24, which seem to suggest that the believer, in union with Christ and possessed of his Spirit, might have some peaceful (if inactive) awareness of God's safekeeping during the interim. (I do not think the Luke 16 parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man determines the outcome of this discussion, as I explain in *The Fire that Consumes*.

It seems very likely to me that the practical effect is the same either way and that the differences just might be phenomenological rather than essential or existential. Even if there is no conscious intermediate state, it would appear to the *deceased believer* that the instant after death ushers in the presence of Christ, since the Resurrection would be the next moment of awareness. There is only an "intermediate" time from the viewpoint of those who survive. ❑

My Journey to China as a Missionary

Rose Gardiner
Presque Isle, Maine

THE YEAR WAS 1948. Shirley Bragg, Frank Toothe, and I trav eled to San Francisco that September to sail to China. When we arrived in California, the longshoremen were on strike, and six weeks later we went to Bellingham, Washington, then we were able to board a Norwegian ship out of the Antacortes, Washington

The crew spoke no English. Every afternoon we were served strong tea and crackers. One of the passengers suggested that they add some water to the tea. The rest of the trip, it was stronger than ever.

One night we awoke to find the ship was not moving. In the morning we sat at the captain's table and he told us of his experience in the night. He had left the pilothouse with the first mate at the wheel. He was tired and went to sleep only to be awakened later by a voice which said, "Go to the pilothouse." He answered, "The first mate can handle it." Again the voice came. "Go, now."

He went to the pilothouse and found that the clear night had turned to heavy fog. He instructed the first mate to cut the speed and sound out. The first mate said that the map showed that the sea was clear. However, the captain insisted that speed be cut. They sounded out and discovered that there was an object in the ocean not far from the ship. The next morning when the fog had lifted, they saw a large rock. If they had kept going and hit it, it would have torn a big gash in the ship and probably all aboard would have drowned. These rocks sometimes come up in the water but not often. We were thankful to God that we had a captain who was a Christian and who listened and obeyed God's voice.

One of the women aboard was a college graduate returning to her home. Her father worked for an American company in China, and she could speak Chinese. One day she was asked to go to the radio room to listen to the news from China. It was telling how the Communists were taking over that country, and the Americans were being evacuated. While we were still at sea, Mr. Toothe cabled Mr. Harold Faulkingham and asked what Shirley and I should do in this situation. By the time we docked at Manila, Philippines, we still had not received a reply to our cable. Afterwards we were told that if a cable is sent while at sea, the ship must be at sea in order to receive an answer.

We moved from the Norwegian ship to a Philippine ship and sailed for Shanghai, China. During a severe storm the ship received great damage. We landed in Hong Kong to trade to a British-Chinese ship, which took us into Shanghai. As we came near the harbor, we saw a lot of boat people, families who lived on small boats. The ship had to travel slowly since the small boats did not watch out for the ship.

Editor's Note: This article is transcribed from a talk given by Miss Gardiner at a recent Maine State WHFMS Conference meeting. We appreciate her niece, Mrs. Dawne McGrath typing the transcript and making it available to the *Advent Christian Witness.*

Arrival in Shanghai

At Shanghai we met our missionaries—Mrs. Frances Toothe, Beulah Rediker Purkiser, and Bertha Cassidy. Hannah Stocks and Sylvia Whitman had sailed for home earlier that day. We stayed in a hotel for ten days.

When we reported to the American consul, we were told that we could not have been turned around earlier because we were not on an American ship. There were Army transport ships making regular trips to Japan for war brides, which were being sent to China to pick up Americans.

The ten days we were in China we had an opportunity to meet David Yang, the Chinese leader for our work in China. He was stationed in Nanking, which was where Shirley and I would have lived. Mr. Yang had a brother in Shanghai and we were invited for an evening meal. We were given a ride to the home in a rickshaw. When we entered, we were given a glass of hot tea to drink. By holding it in our hands, we kept warm, since there was no heat in the house.

At the table there were only the men of the family. The women ate in the kitchen. We were served rice, chicken, chicken broth, and greens. We were given a bowl with rice and we put the other items on top of the rice. We had an orange for dessert, which meant the family had money. We ate the meal with chopsticks.

The door of the home was left open so the neighbors could watch the guests eat, and there was a large crowd in the courtyard. This showed that the family was popular. We were given a tour of the home because we

would be leaving soon to go back to America.

Another day we ate at the home of Henry Chow's sister. He came down from Wuhu, another missions station, to meet with us. We went to this American home by taxi. She worked as a nurse in the hospital. There we had chop suey, but there was no dessert.

When we were told when our ship would sail, we were informed that the size of baggage we could take aboard would be limited. Since Shirley's trunks were smaller than mine, I put my name on one of Shirley's trunks and addressed it to Presque Isle, Maine, and Shirley put her name on one of my trunks and addressed it to Waterbury, Vermont.

We were told that the ship would stop at Yokohama, Japan, to pick up more passengers. I had with me the Advent Christian Manual with all the church pastors' names and their addresses. I went to the captain and explained that as we would be arriving in the States at Christmas time, I was afraid we would have problems getting a room at a hotel. If I knew where we were going to dock, I could send a letter from Yokohama to a pastor.

The captain said he was not to give out that information until after we left Japan, however, he did have folders to distribute at that time to anyone who wanted them. He laid them out and I saw they were for the Seattle, Washington area. I thanked him and sent a letter to Rev. Matthew Farnum, pastor at the Seattle, Washington, Advent Christian Church. I gave him the name of our ship and date of arrival.

Return via Japan

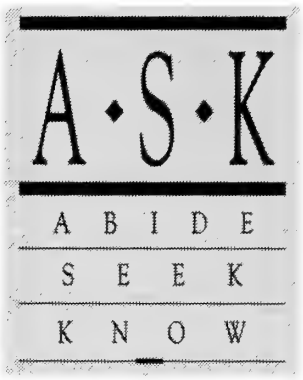
In Japan, a guide came aboard and explained that there would be four different tours available, one in the forenoon and one in the afternoon each day. Since we were to be there two days, we signed up for all four tours. She needed a specific number of people for the tours and we were able to participate in all of them.

The thing I remember most was the large Buddhist temple. It was shaped like a Buddha idol, and we went up into the head and looked out at the scenery. Because the American soldiers had come too near the temple, it was not being used by the Buddhists for worship but had become a tourist attraction.

When we docked in Seattle, Mr. Farnum met us. We went down to put our trunks through customs and were told they were closing at noon because of the holiday. If we could get our trunks out of the warehouse, there would be no delay in putting them through customs, but by eleven o'clock, we still had two trunks to come out of the warehouse. No one was allowed to go past the guide to identify their baggage. We described them to one man, but he couldn't find them. Shirley watched for her chance and got into the warehouse, and the man brought out the trunks she identified. We were able to change the addresses and Mr.

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Mission Prayer Partnership



December

1 As we celebrate the first Sunday of Advent, pray that the Holy Spirit will prepare our hearts for **worship and celebration** as we prepare to mark the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Praise God for the commitment of **Frank Jewett**, **Aloysius Okon**, and **Harold Turner** as they prepare to leave for three weeks of ministry with Advent Christians in West Africa tomorrow.

3 Pray for **Frank**, **Aloysius**, and **Harold** as they leave today for West Africa to work with Advent Christian pastors and leaders in Nigeria and Ghana.

4 Praise God for over 700 **college students** from Advent Christian congregations studying at college campuses across Canada and the United States.

5 Pray that as 1996 draws to a close, God will supply for the needs of the Advent Christian General Conference and its home and world missions work through **United Ministries**.

6 Praise God for the vision that he has given **Russell and Noelle Carle** to see expansion of Advent Christian ministry in New Zealand.

7 Pray for **Russell, Noelle, and their children** as they celebrate their second holiday season in New Zealand.

8 On this second Sunday of Advent, praise God for his marvelous **grace and mercy** expressed through our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 Pray today that each Advent Christian missionary serving overseas will know **God's strength** and lovingkindness as they celebrate the holiday season.

10 Praise God for the opportunities that **Steven and Ann Lay** continue to have as they work to establish an Advent Christian congregation in the greater Kobe area.

11 Pray that God will use **Steve and Ann** as they communicate the good news of the gospel to people in Japan with whom they come in contact.

12 Praise God for the ongoing ministry of **Japanese Advent Christians** in their communities.

13 Pray for **Karen Rigney** during her time of furlough in Rochester, N.H.

14 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Richard Russell** is having in his role as the Director of Church Relations.

15 On this third Sunday of Advent, pray that the **light of the gospel** will be made known throughout the world.

16 Praise God for new Philippine missionaries **Jeff and Penny Vann**.

17 Pray for **Jeff, Penny, and their three children** as they continue to adjust to life at Oro Bible College and in the Philippines.

18 Praise God for his call to ministry and service for Advent Christian students at **Oro Bible College**.

19 Pray for **Warren and Jackie Prestidge** as Warren provides administrative leadership for Oro Bible College.

20 Praise God for **David Vignali's** strategic service to Advent Christian missions in the Philippines through a variety of important administrative tasks.

21 Pray that Advent Christians in **China** will experience God's strength and protection.

22 On this fourth Sunday of Advent, praise God for sending **Jesus Christ** to be "Immanuel, which means, God with us" (Matthew 1:15).

23 Pray for **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** as they serve Advent Christian missions in the inner city of Memphis, Tennessee.

24 On this Christmas Eve, pray that God will reveal himself to **your relatives and friends** who don't know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

25 "**Joy to the world**, the Lord is come, let earth receive her King!"

26 Pray for Mexico Field Superintendent **Carlos Quintero** as he provides leadership for the ministry of Advent Christian missions in Mexico.

27 Praise God for the church-planting work that our Mexican national Advent Christian missionaries—**Alberto and Fabiola Gomez**, **Mario and Elena Cortez**, and **Joel and Omega Garcia**—continue to do on the Baja California peninsula.

28 Pray for students and faculty at **Tecate Bible Institute** as they prepare to resume classes after Christmas break.

29 Praise God that the Advent Christian congregation in **Zagreb, Croatia**, continues to make disciples for Christ under the leadership of Desir ée Ahola.

30 Pray for **Desirée Ahola** and his family as they continue to serve Christ in this eastern European nation.

31 As we prepare for 1997, praise God that thousands of men and women, boys and girls have come to a **saving knowledge** of Jesus Christ throughout the world during 1996.

Celebrating

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before a roaring fire, with a cup of cider or hot chocolate warming your hands. My friend, Angela, tells me that her warmest memories are of her grandfather reading the Christmas story out of the family Bible, illuminated only by the flicker of candlelight, while the kids sipped hot cider and ate Christmas cookies. Making the reading of the story such a special family time overshadowed all the lure of secular festivities and made Christ's birth the central reason for celebration. Other families use video cartoons such as *The King is Born* from the Family Entertainment Network or Hanna Barbera's *The Nativity*. Still others put on a family skit of the Christmas story, with each person playing a part. This is especially fun to present in front of a small group of extended family or close friends.

Emulate Jesus by being "secret servants"

Secular celebrations of Christmas often include "secret santas," in which people give secret gifts to the person whose name they draw. My husband's family has used a variation on this custom called "secret servants." Secret servants celebrate Christ's birth by emulating Jesus, "for even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45, NIV). In his family, the week before Christmas they would draw names then pray daily for the person whom they had drawn. They also served them secretly by doing such things as cleaning the other person's room, baking their favorite snack, doing their chores, or leaving them little surprises. As they sneaked about serving one another, they were reminded of the reason for Christ's birth. It was always fun to try to guess your secret servant without being found out by the person you were serving.

So as we seek to rescue our families from the flurry of the Christmas season, let's create warm family traditions that glorify Christ and bring us all closer to him during this most precious time of year! ❑

Marlo M. Schalesky is a freelance writer of 100 articles in many different publications. She also received an award for 'most promising new writer of 1994' at the Mt. Hermon Christian Writers Conference. She resides in Gilroy, California.

China

from page 13

Farnum sent them to their destinations after the holiday. We went to his home to stay while in Seattle.

Our trip as missionaries to China ended when we boarded the train at 2:00 p.m. December 24 to travel home. We arrived in Boston the afternoon of December 27 where we ate dinner that evening with Mr. and Mrs. Faulkingham, then took the evening train home. ❑

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

Only those who know just how bad sin is can also know how great grace is. For the grace of God has appeared right where you would least expect to see it: smack in the chaos of sin and evil, smack in the brokenness of our lives. In the place where one might expect to find only grief, one sees grace as well.

—Scott Hoezee

God loves you. He wants to have an intimate relationship with you. He wants you to depend only on him, to hear his voice and know his will. Your relationship to God is the key to hearing when God speaks to you.

—Harry Blackaby

The truth of the matter is, we all come to prayer with a tangled mass of motives—altruistic and selfish, merciful and hateful, loving and bitter. Frankly, this side of eternity we will never unravel the good from the bad, the pure from the impure. But what I have come to see is that God is big enough to receive us with all our mixture. We do not have to be bright, or pure, or filled with the truth, or anything. That is what grace means, and not only are we saved by grace, we live by it as well. And we pray by it.

—Richard Foster

God will inevitably appear to disappoint the man who is attempting to use him as a convenience, a prop, or a comfort, for his own plans.

—J.B. Phillips

God's love is not human. His love is not normal. His love sees your sin and loves you still. Does he approve of your error? No. Do you need to repent? Yes. But do you repent for his sake or yours? Yours. His ego needs no apology. His love needs no bolstering. And he could not love you more than he does right now.

—Max Lucado

Christ came to transform society—but he didn't come to do so through political action. His plan was to change society by transforming the individual people in that society—by giving them a new heart, a new spirit, a new orientation, a new direction, a new birth, a resurrection life, and the death of self and selfishness. Once you transform the individuals, you will have a new society.

—Ray C. Stedman

When all is said and done, tabloid and talk-show truth is no truth at all. Rather it is a form of power games set in an entertaining commercial mode. Nothing could be farther from the grace and truth that Jesus spoke and lived. "Doing God's work in God's way" poses special challenges in the days of "shock jocks," the "gawk shows," and the exponents of hard-core exposes.

—Os Guinness

Sources: Scott Hoezee in *The Riddle of Grace* (Eerdmans, 1996); Harry Blackaby in *Experiencing God* (LifeWay Press, 1990); J.B. Phillips in *Your God is Too Small* (MacMillan, 1961); Max Lucado in *A Gentle Thunder* (Word Books, 1995); Richard Foster in *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (Harper Collins, 1993); Ray C. Stedman in *Body Life* (Discovery House, 1995); Os Guiness in *Fit Bodies Fat Minds* (Baker, 1994); Joel Belz in *World* magazine.

In Other Words

Jesus set the pattern for addressing sin directly, but with utmost compassion, when he spoke to the woman accused of adultery. He didn't make excuses, shift the blame, or suggest therapy. Instead, he spoke the most freeing words the woman could possibly have heard: "Go," he said—guaranteeing that she would not be stoned to death as she had certainly feared. But this was no easy-believism. For she must certainly have spent the rest of her life pondering the other four words in Jesus' charge: "...and sin no more."

Is modern-day evangelism really better at all this than Jesus was? Would we have handled this woman by skipping all reference to her biggest problem? Then the ultimate question would be whether the things we went on to say about Jesus were really true either.

—Joel Belz

Correction

On page ten of Floyd McIntyre's September 1996 article, "The Return of Christ," the second sentence of the second full paragraph in the third column is incorrect. The sentence should read, "The biblical teachings regarding what happens to people when they die (individual eschatology) and what happens when Christ returns (cosmic eschatology) have defined who Advent Christians are."

We apologize for the error.

Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
Box 17 Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Marion Damon (March 27)
Box 17 Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Warren Prestidge
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Margaret Helms (September 18)
3612 Brief Rd. E.
Monroe, NC 28110

Jeff and Penny Vann
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
80-1517 Tenjin Cho
Ono Shi 675-13
JAPAN
Ph. 011-81-794-62-8744

Karen Rigney (June 5)
c/o Emmanuel A.C. Church
P.O. Box 1812
Rochester, NH 03866-1812

New Zealand

Russell and Noelle Carle
(December 30 and December 19)
(Ryan, November 15, 1979)
(Emily, June 23, 1983)
(Peter, August 14, 1991)
51 Brylee Dr.
Conifer Grove
Auckland 1702
NEW ZEALAND

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
Bududuram Refugee Camp
National Mobilization Program
Box 46
Accra, GHANA

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

China
Our pastor in China
All correspondence should be channelled through the missions office.

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devadason
Beulah Margaret Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Croatia

Desirée Ahola
c/o Advent Christian Croatia Ministry
Bozidar Magovca 44/7 Kat.
Trund 10000 Zagreb
Croatia – Europe

Mexico

Carlos Quintero
387 W. Poppyfields Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
(818) 791-2447

Mario and Elena Cortez
Joel and Omega Garcia
Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Carlos Quintero

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Vice-president
Harold Patterson; World Missions
Millie Griswold; Resource Development

P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

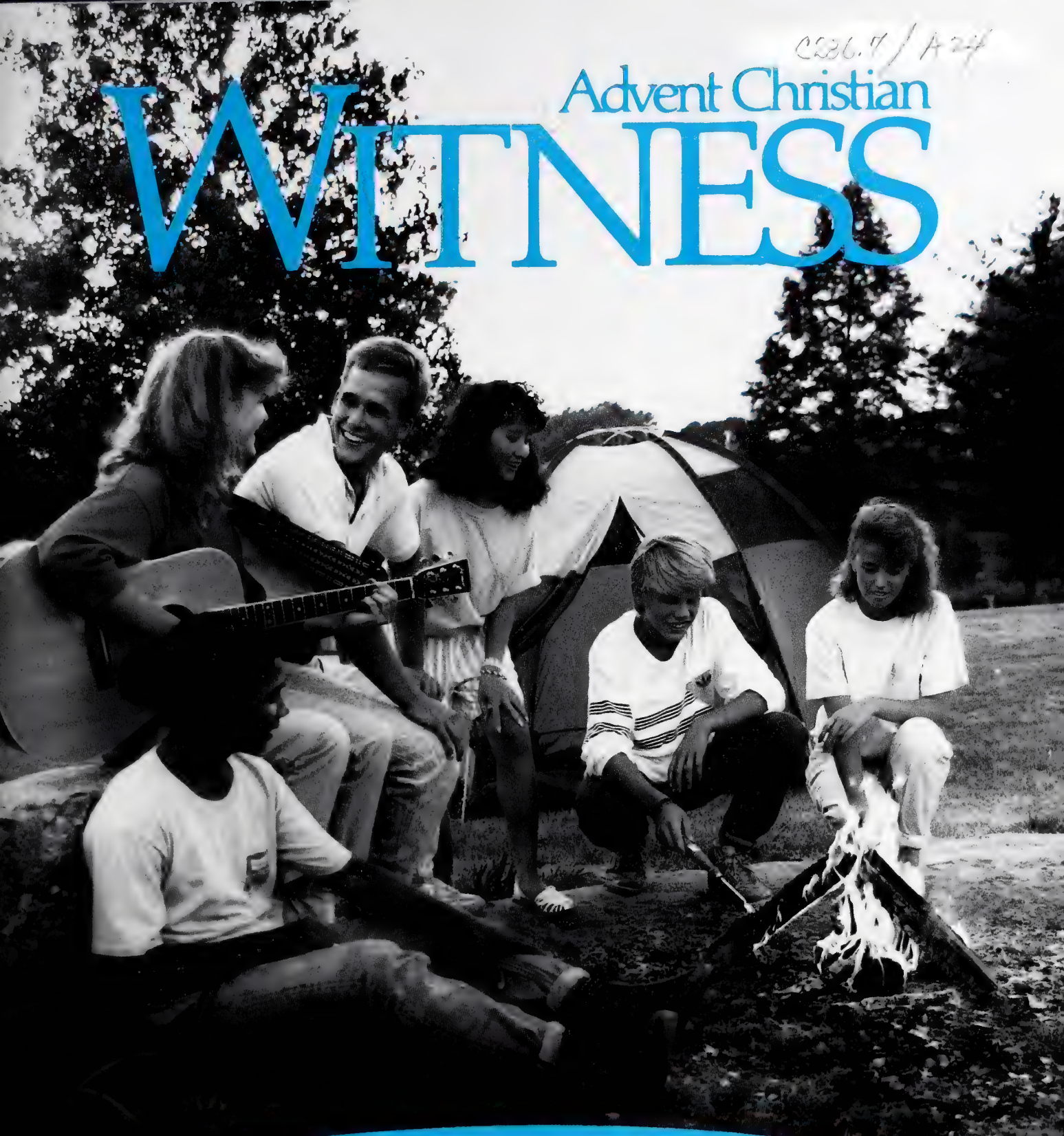
Russell Giasson; Services
Robert Mayer; Publications
Richard Russell; Church Relations

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Advent Christian

WITNESS



Three perspectives on youth ministries

December 1996

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Small churches can have vital youth ministries, according to Terry Stephens. He challenges pastors and youth leaders to demonstrate love for young people by the way they live and by practicing the love of Christ.

Christian Camping: A Vital Link to Youth Ministry 6

"There's something special about Christian camping," writes Pastor Jim Gilroy. "God uses it in a distinct and powerful way" and as a valuable tool in youth ministry.

Youth and the Coming World Revival 9

David Bryant suggests that God is moving powerfully among young people. Is this a sign of revival?

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Each month, Advent Christian pastors communicate important ideas and thoughts through their church newsletters. Here is a selection of six brief articles excerpted from church newsletters that will inspire and challenge you in your Christian faith.

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Camping and discipleship is an ideal partnership. Both play an important role in youth ministries.

Cover and inside photos by Jim Whitmer Photography

Volume 44, Number 10

Advent Christian Witness

Editor **Robert Mayer** Student Intern **Dawn Rutan**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria



ULTIMATE LOYALTIES

ONE OF THE core teachings of the New Testament focuses on the notion of the kingdom of God. "The time has come," Jesus told those who listened to him. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news" (Mark 1:15). Throughout Scripture, we read of God's promise to destroy the power of sin and establish his rule throughout heaven and earth. Each Sunday, many of us pray the words that Jesus taught, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

The New Testament teaches that God's kingdom has already begun to enter our world through Jesus Christ. The essence of the Gospel is that through his death and resurrection, Jesus has the authority not only to forgive sins, but to grant citizenship in God's kingdom. When Jesus challenged his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations," he summoned them to call women and men everywhere to become citizens of God's kingdom. When that kingdom is fully realized at the second coming of Jesus Christ, John tells us in Revelation that it will consist of people "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9).

How do we balance our loyalty to our country with our ultimate allegiance to God?

In the meantime, Christians live with a dual citizenship. Most of us are citizens of the country where we live. At the same time, we're citizens of God's kingdom. Whether it's ancient Rome, medieval Europe, or modern-day America, most Christians have struggled with a problem that lies at the heart of our dual citizenship: how do we balance our loyalty to our country with our ultimate allegiance to God?

The end of democracy?

During the last few months, I've noticed something new being discussed among evangelicals in the United States. It's perhaps best summarized by Charles Colson in the November 1995 issue of *First Things*. "In America today," writes Colson, "we have very nearly reached the completion of a long process I can only describe as the systematic usurpation of ultimate political power by the American judiciary—a usurpation that compels evangelical Christians... to ask sobering questions about the moral legitimacy of the current political order and our allegiance to it."

Colson speaks for a number of evangelicals (and others) who believe that the courts, especially the Supreme Court, have overstepped their constitutional authority in rulings dealing with abortion, euthanasia, homosexual rights, and religious freedom. "It would be hard to imagine," according to Colson, "that a Christian in good conscience could swear to uphold the Constitution or laws of a nation that practices the horrendous offense against God of taking the defenseless lives of the weakest among us: babies, the elderly, and the sick."

Strong words. And while Colson isn't ready to advocate civil disobedience, he does think that Christians "must— slowly, prayerfully, and with great deliberation and serious debate—prepare ourselves for what the future seems likely to bring under a regime in which the courts have usurped the democratic process by reckless exercise of naked power." In other words, Christians must prepare to live in a country where they will no longer be able to recognize the moral authority of the American government nor support its domestic and foreign policies.

I expect the issues Colson raises to become discussed and debated widely among evangelicals during the next five years, especially as disillusionment with the Christian Coalition and other so-called "religious-right" organizations continues to grow. The danger is that if we're not careful, some Christians could wind up embracing a dangerous form of anti-Americanism now found in the more extreme militia movements.

A provisional allegiance

Perhaps Christians in the United States have

continued on page 17



YOUTH MINISTRY HEROES

Terry Stephens
Wilmington, N.C.

AS I FIRST began to think back to my childhood and to those who discipled me, I was at a loss. I didn't remember anyone calling me their "disciple." No one had set me aside once or twice a week and helped me deal with the deeper things in my spiritual walk and life. Then as I continued to discover more about what discipleship really was, I found that there were several who played vital roles in helping me become the person I am today, in helping shape my Christian faith and in helping me grow in my understanding of Jesus Christ. There were many who stood out as people who challenged me to take greater steps and leaps of faith.

I was raised in a small Advent Christian church in the southeastern United States. We had a youth group—my twin brother, two cousins who lived out of town, and a couple of others who were peripheral to say the least. I remember as high school students, we tried to coordinate some conference youth rallies. We didn't have any idea what we were doing. But we took turns speaking, leading activities, and calling others to attend. It was a far cry from some of the high-quality programs I have since seen and taken part in, but it did something.

My pastor was key

I also remember summer camp, and the leadership opportunities several of us had because there were so few of us. I remember my pastor taking us to camp, packed in his car with plastic covers over the seats, no air conditioner, and every fan we could possibly pack in the car. I remember his singing the hymn *I Love Thee* to all of us until the words were ingrained so deep that I'll never forget. He was an important person who took time to take part in my life.

He would not only take us to camp, but would take time out to direct the camp. He knew how important this could be for our salvation. I remember when I found myself at the altar during camp, crying for a reason I didn't understand, having God's Spirit working and present, nudging me toward Christian ministry. I remember arriving in Lenox, Mass., alone on a bus, with half my luggage missing, ready to begin a journey that would bring others from all over the world into the development of my faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

They taught me more about how he moves, lives, and works in the lives of people. They challenged me. They discipled me. I now know and understand that there were many who shared parts of their lives with me as a child and as a teenager. They made a life-changing impact on the person God was creating me to be. My pastor was key in that process.

A pastor has a vital role in youth ministry. In many churches, the pastor is it. If there is to be any youth ministry at all, the pastor often is the one to make it happen. Sometimes that is through volunteers in the church, sometimes it's his job entirely, and sometimes it simply doesn't get done. It's a difficult task to devote time to this area. And, to be honest, it's often overlooked. It is essential that the senior pastor support and take an active role in youth ministry and discipling students.

It is essential that the senior pastor support and take an active role in youth ministry and discipling students.

Youth ministry in a small congregation

I recently met two outstanding volunteers in youth ministry at the Advent Christian General Conference meetings in Tampa, Florida. Both were part of the *Sonlife Strategy for Growing a Healthy Youth Ministry*. Deanna Crews of Snellville, Georgia, and Sherry McCulley of Norcross, Georgia, are youth workers at Hope Community Fellowship (formerly Stone Mountain Advent Christian Church). In a few short minutes, I realized, these two women are obviously committed to Jesus Christ and have a deep-felt love for young people and youth ministry.

Their testimonies brought encouragement as I listened to how they saw their pastor, Brent Ross, supporting them in their effort to reach students. They spoke of the fact that he is a major source of encouragement for them and has made it clear that youth ministry will be an integral, effective part of their church and conference. They stay committed to the task that lies ahead because of the example set by their pastor.

It was Brent's commitment that brought Deanna through the turbulent years of adolescence and eventually led to her taking the position as youth sponsor for the church. She recalls, "Brent would go ahead and meet with me on Sunday nights and go through our lesson, even if I was the only one attending. We met every week, regardless." That type of devotion makes a difference. That is how it works. One person taking time with another person to share the truths of Christ at work in their life is what discipleship is all about.

Sherry is new to youth ministry, and is just learning what working with students is all about. "I didn't know what to do with kids or how to go about conducting a youth meeting. Pastor Brent told us that we needed to come to Tampa and take part in this seminar," says Sherry. "It has been exciting to see that you don't have to have a big group of kids to have a successful youth program."

You see, these women lead a small group of young people. They talk of their joys and frustrations working with "their" kids. They have witnessed from personal experience and have had it reinforced through the Sonlife seminar that discipleship is the key. Their pastor has taken the initiative to set a good example by equipping his leaders to pass that example along to others. That, by the way, is the process of multiplying disciples.

Pastors are integral in ensuring the success of youth ministry. While in Tampa, I met other pastors who take a strong supportive role in youth ministry—to the point of being the youth sponsor themselves. Such is the case with Pastor Raymond Brown, from Augusta, Georgia. He has taken the responsibility of actually conducting the youth program himself until the right volunteer rises from his congregation. Another great example is Pastor Jim Osborne, from the Advent Christian Church in Sumas, Washington. Jim attended General Conference with two volunteers from the youth ministry program at his church. Chris Nims and Jennifer Patterson are both excited about students and eager to be as effective as possible.

These people are youth ministry heroes. By their way of life and their love for young people, they have seized the opportunity to be disciplers to the young people in their churches. They, along with myself, have witnessed pastors and the impact they can have in youth ministry. Hats off to the pastors who have seen the vision—and have taken the challenge! And hats off to the volunteer youth workers and leaders who give their time and energy to communicate Christ's love to young people in Advent Christian congregations throughout Canada and the United States.

The Advent Christian Commission on Youth Ministries recognizes that it is you who are on the front lines, and it is you who devote your time day in and day out to developing students who will impact the world for generations to come. Our mission statement is to "equip youth leaders for Christ and his cause." We want to serve you, those who are doing the job in the local church. Watch for exciting training opportunities and call us for input or support. Our desire is to know who you are and to provide support while also providing the necessary tools to be successful in reaching students for the cause of Christ. ❑

Terry Stephens is a youth ministry veteran who serves as associate pastor of United Advent Christian Church in Wilmington, N.C., and as a member of the Advent Christian Commission on Youth Ministries.



CHRISTIAN CAMPING

A VITAL LINK FOR YOUTH MINISTRY

Jim Gilroy
Bishopville, S.C.

THE SIGHTS, the sounds, even the smells are uniquely unmistakable. Children and teenagers laughing, singing, playing, and praying. Screen doors on cabins slamming. Trays in food lines clanging. Water splashing amid shrieks of joy at the nearby pool, lake, or oceanfront. The smoke of campfires, the musty odor of cabins that have been locked and boarded up through fall and winter, the wafting fragrance of another camp meal being cooked in the dining hall.

There is something special about Christian camping. Something that goes far beyond what the physical senses are able to absorb. God uses Christian camping in a distinct and powerful way. Christian camping plays a strategic role in the youth and children's ministry of the local church.

Nothing like Christian camping

I received my "baptism" into Christian camping in 1959 as an 11-year-old junior camper (a late bloomer by today's standards) and I was hooked. I knew that I had come upon something unlike any other experience in my life: something real, something life-changing, something that would give me a personal encounter with God that I had not experienced in my one-year-old Christian life.

Seven years later, I spent the sum-

mer working as a counselor at Christian camps and a whole new world was opened to me: being used by God in a camp setting to assist children and adolescents to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior, to rededicate their lives to him, or to trust him with specific needs and problems. It was an overpowering, spiritually intoxicating experience, one that was to shape many of the paths that my life and areas of service for the Lord would take right up to the present time.

Christian camping provides an accelerated spiritual atmosphere, free of the entanglements and obstacles of daily life.

In the past thirty years since that summer, I have been involved with Christian camping in many ways: counselor, director, Bible teacher, camp pastor, counselor trainer, recreation director, program committee member, and camp board member. I have been at Advent Christian campgrounds from the tip of northern Maine to the tropics of Florida, from the flatland of the Midwest to the mountains of California. And still the basic truth that I first learned, as a junior camper, rings true: there is *nothing* like Christian camping. God blesses and uses this medium of ministry in dynamic ways. It's still an indispensable part of youth ministry today.

As stated in the book, *Blueprint for Quality*, "Christ-centered camping is not an addition to, but an integral part of the total program of Christian education in the local church. It is therefore to be viewed and evaluated in the light of the overall goal of Christian education which, in essence, is guiding people into full spiritual maturity."

In Colossians 1:28, the apostle Paul sets the scriptural basis for this all-encompassing, holistic type of ministry: "So naturally, we proclaim Christ! We warn everyone we meet, and we teach everyone we can all that we know about him, so that, if possible, we may bring every man up to his full maturity in Christ Jesus. This is what I am working at all the time with all the strength that God gives me."

Sounds like a description of disciple-making and not coincidentally, so does the purpose of Christian camping as described by Floyd and Pauline Todd: "Christian camping is a Christ-centered program of small-group living in a simple, controlled out-of-door environment where the camper is enabled to develop recreational, educational, and social skills and to know Christ as Savior and Friend."

Or, in the words of Werner Graendorf and Lloyd Mattson, "Christian camping provides a vital cog in the machinery of disciple-making in the youth ministry of the church. The overall purpose of Christian camping is to use, as fully as possible, the camp experience as an opportunity for discipling individuals toward maturity in Christ."

Throughout his ministry Jesus Christ was occupied with making disciples. His ministry was devoted to teaching and training men that they might be his disciples. Discipleship represents a demanding, productive, personal relationship with Christ that is at the very center of Christianity. It's evident from both Christ's example as an educator and his direct command in Matthew 28:19-20 to "go therefore, and make disciples...teaching them," that in Christian education (including the camping ministry), that the making of disciples is of tantamount importance.

Here Christianity moves from the polite atmosphere of the church building to the give and take of everyday life, where the rubber meets the road.

Making disciples through Christian camping

The essence of discipling historically and by definition is teaching by example as well as by word. So, while we have Christ's words recorded in our gospels we also have his directive to "Follow me" (John 1:43). A major element in discipleship is demonstration. It is here that the uniqueness of Christian camping comes to the forefront. Christian camping provides the church with what may be its most effective opportunity outside the walls of the sanctuary for a true discipling ministry.

Camping and discipleship is an ideal partnership. The holistic approach of camping touches every area of the camper's life and needs intensely, in a relatively short amount of time (usually one power-packed week).

Spiritually, camp provides for the basic human need for response, where campers come face-to-face with Jesus Christ as Savior *and* Lord of their lives. I recently read some shocking statements from the Barna Research Group. One out of six born-again Christians says that they never have experienced God's presence. Among Protestant, Catholic, and Christian church attenders only one out of four says they feel God's presence daily.

Christian camping provides an accelerated spiritual atmosphere, free of the entanglements and obstacles of daily life. The focus is purely and simply on Jesus Christ and his Word, creating an atmosphere where the Holy Spirit can do wondrous things in campers' lives.

Young people make many spiritual decisions at Christian camps. Some for salvation, some for dedication, some for full-time Christian service. Statistics say that one of every four campers makes a significant life-changing decision at Christian camp and that one-third of all missionaries made a decision at camp that ulti-

mately led them to the mission field.

In June 1996, I served on the staff of a teen camp. Of the sixty-five campers present, ten made first-time decisions for Christ, eight committed their lives to full-time service, and each night there were numerous rededications and counseling situations during which specific needs and problems were given to the Lord. This is not an isolated case. I have witnessed similar results in Christian camps over the past thirty years.

Socially, camp addresses the basic human needs for recognition and security. The friendly confines of the camp cabin allow each camper the privilege of being recognized as an individual and being treated accordingly. You immediately become part of a cabin unit and are given opportunities each day to make significant contributions toward that cabin's (or team's) successes. Acceptances come quickly, and praise and camaraderie flow freely. Lifetime friendships are often made at camp. The desire to belong is successfully satisfied. More importantly the focus of Christian camp is to bring every camper into the membership and security of God's family and experience the security of walking with Christ down the pathway of life. Many leaders are developed through summer camping programs where they recognize and fine-tune leadership skills heretofore unknown and undeveloped.

The twenty-four hour living experience of camping provides an environment similar to that of Christ's discipling.

Physically, camp meets the need for physical exercise and recreation, preferably out-of-doors as much as the climate permits. Camp is fun with a purpose. Many campers gain new skills at camp (I learned to swim, roller skate, and shoot a rifle at camp), or at least try some new physical activities such as archery, horseback riding, tent camping, or cooking over an open fire for the first time.

"We are all agreed," according to Barbara Ellen Joy, former president of the American Camping Association, "that what actually happens to a child in camp, for better or worse, happens largely through the activities in which he engages." The variety of activities, the challenges and opportunities to try new things, the exposure to the outdoors and the closeness and availability of so many natural resources makes camp a memorable time for the physically gifted as well as the physically challenged.

Mentally, camp meets the need for new and challenging experiences. Camping demands a creative sense of working together to solve new problems, to handle new materials, to think new thoughts, to learn new skills, and to acquire new values. The apostle Paul speaks of being "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). Christian camping offers the opportunity to daily renew your mind far from the constant barrage of the mental garbage which is thrust at our young people day in and day out in their natural habitat.

Four distinctives of Christian camping

There are four major areas in which the camping experience is distinct and unique. And each area ties directly to the overall theme of discipling.

First, **the twenty-four hour living experience** of camping provides an environment similar to that of Christ's discipling. It offers daily opportunity for development of Christian living in the normal routines of life. As with those who walked with Jesus, here is a place for the questions and interactions that arise naturally in a day's experiences. Here Christianity moves from the polite atmosphere of the church building to the give and take of everyday life, where the rubber meets the road. Here Christian teaching becomes not just philosophical and theoretical but experiential.

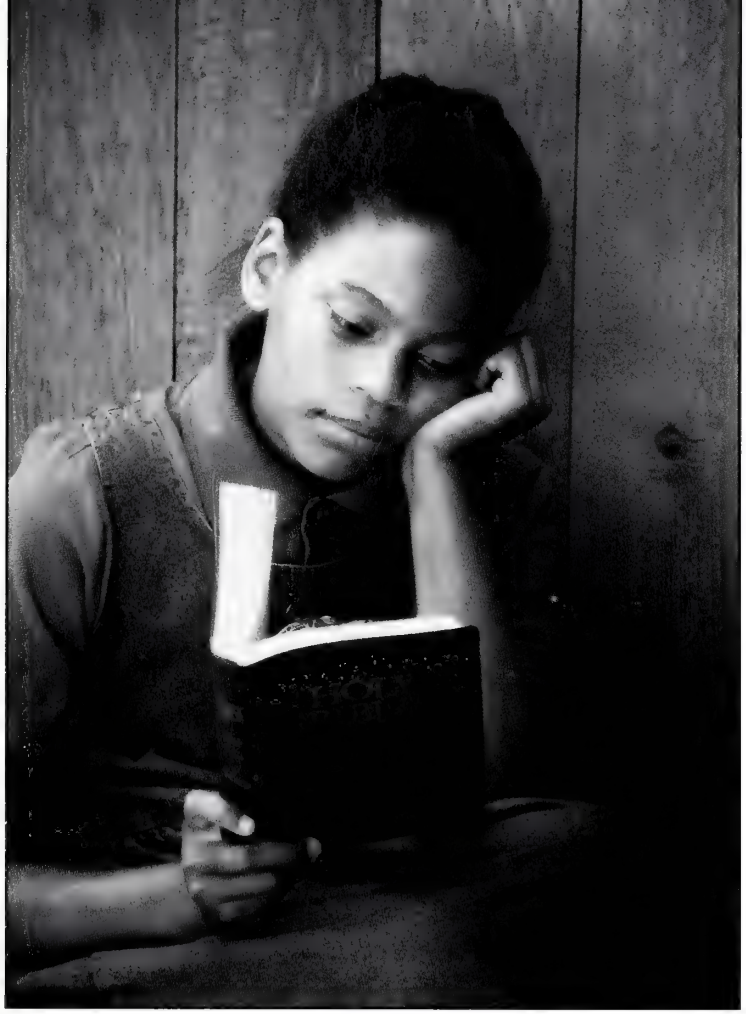
Second, **group living** is distinctive of organized camping. This factor provides opportunity to live and learn with a peer group. The discipling process of Jesus' followers was sharpened by their interrelationships. There was the warmth of Spirit-guided love as well as the personality honing abrasiveness of *very* human living. Christian camping provides rich opportunities for true "body life" to have expression and development.

Third, **qualified Christian adult leadership** is an important factor that makes Christian camping distinct from its secular neighbors. Camping offers the opportunity for spiritually mature women and men of all ages to lead and counsel campers in a variety of ways. Here, the "follow me" principle of Jesus' discipling is placed right where it should be, at the center. Leading and teaching by example is essential to the discipling experience. What a tremendous opportunity for a Christian counselor to teach the meaning of the Christian experience not only verbally but also by his or her life just as Jesus did.

Fourth, **the outdoor environment** is the final distinctive of the camping experience. It is evident time and time again that Christ's ministry was enhanced by many of the environmental features common to our camping experience today. The very nature of the discipling process, where illustration and openness have a place, is encouraged by the natural setting. Lakes, trees, and even storms as well and the world of nature in general were prominent in the ministry and teaching of our Lord. And they can still be used as a part of a ministry in today's camp setting.

One aspect of my stock-in-trade as a camp director was to have each cabin unit construct a worship altar in

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YOUTH AND THE COMING WORLD REVIVAL

David Bryant

THE DAY BEGAN as I dropped off my two cautiously enthusiastic teenagers at the high school flagpole for the 7 a.m. *See You at the Pole* event in our city.

It ended as I drank in Tom Brokaw's "America in Depth" 5-minute report on *See You at the Pole* and the student prayer movement nationwide. (Even the national media can't deny what is happening!) Retiring to bed three hours later, I had to confess again to God my utter conviction: We are on the verge of the greatest revival in the history of our nation, and students are absolutely *key* to the breakthrough for which we pray.

Youth hold fewer presuppositions and prejudices against the notion that God can work in extraordinary ways. At the same time, they are much more aware of their own brokenness than many adults.

In fact, that's what Psalm 110 tells us to expect! "From the womb of the dawn, your youth will come to you" (v. 3) is spoken to King Jesus as further explanation of how "your troops will be willing in the day of your battle" (v. 2). It is a day of revival!—a day designed to extend Christ's scepter into the midst of his enemies. And, a day that rises, first and foremost, out of his own life of prayer (v. 4). But note again: it is the youth who are seen to be leading the way, at the head of his army.

Historically, this drama has been repeated over and over. Just scan the past 300 years, for example. Nikolaus Zinzendorf, age 16, joined with five other teenagers to form a prayer group at school in Germany in the 1720s. Called "The Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed," it became the seedbed for a revival prayer movement that swept all of Europe and beyond. Two student prayer groups in the 1800s in our own country—one in 1806, the other in 1886—launched major revival movements that resulted in fresh advances in world missions. One, called "the Student Volunteer Movement," fulfilled the vision of Psalm 110 like nothing ever seen before.

Or take the 16-year-old girl in Andrew Murray's church in Wellington, South Africa, who in 1860 led a revival prayer movement among her peers that totally intimidated this internationally respected pastor. But eventually Murray repented of his opposition and blindness, and went on to become one of the foremost expositors of prayer and revival—writing over 120 books that, in most cases, touched on these issues. His last book, *The State of the Church*, was a ringing call in 1910 for pastors worldwide to unite in prayer for revival as the only hope for their generation. Thus, one teenager eventually impacted the body of Christ in many nations.

Stories like these abound on every hand. Dr. J. Edwin Orr, with three Ph.Ds in the field of revival history, wrote a book out of his doctorate at UCLA entitled *Campus Aflame*. In it he surveys student campus revival prayer movements and how they have made an impact on the church over and over again. In many of the accounts he is looking more at college-level young people. But in terms of experience and sophistication about life, today's teens are probably at the same level.

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The Big Picture

Karl Borchardt
Seattle, Wash.

THE SCRIPTURES are clear about the promises of God; what he will do and has done for those who follow and obey him. Yet, when we pray and see no answers to our prayers, we act as if the chances of receiving an answer are about as remote as winning the Lotto. Why is that? Is it because we have experienced so many failures of others to keep their promises, that we naturally attribute the same to our Lord? Is it because we have prayed earnestly for an answer, only to have no answer forthcoming? Or is it simply because we do not know what God has promised in the Scriptures, along with what he expects on our part to answer our prayers?

Years ago, I used to watch a series called *The Big Picture*. It was a documentary about the U.S. Army designed to present the "big picture" so that viewers could understand what the Army was doing for the country. How do we picture God? Is he something out there who occasionally interrupts the course of our lives? Is he a person who, on occasion, does something miraculous to remind those who believe in him that he has not gone away on a far journey? Or is he someone beyond our ability to understand? Is it useless to expect anything from him? Can we merely hope that he will notice us and grant us some small favor as he goes on to more important calls for help? How do we picture God? This question is fundamental and important because our picture, our vision of him will determine our relationship with him.

When we pray and see no answers to our prayers, we act as if the chances of receiving an answer are about as remote as winning the Lotto. Why is that?

While reading Exodus 23:25-26, I stopped to consider the following words:

"Worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you, and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span."

Do we picture a God who will bless our food and water? Who will give us what we need to live? Do we picture a God who will not only take away sickness that comes upon us, but will not allow it to reach us in the first place? Do we picture a God who will give us a full life lived not only for ourselves but also for fulfilling his will for us? Our God is bigger than any picture we can visualize of him. He is bigger than any picture we can visualize of him working in our lives, as well as in the lives of others.

We need a clearer picture of our Lord and what he can do for us and others. We need to enlarge our understanding, our vision of our Lord in our lives, to see the "big picture": a picture that will allow the Lord to do all those things he so eagerly wants to do in our lives. What is the size of your picture? ❑

EDITOR'S NOTE

Several readers have told me how much they enjoyed the selection of inspirational articles from Advent Christian pastors that we excerpted from church newsletters in our November issue last year. This year, we present six more articles written by Advent Christian pastors originally published in their church newsletters during the past twelve months. These articles deserve a wider circulation because they represent some important thinking and reflection about Christian doctrine, ministry, and living. I hope you'll find these articles both inspirational and challenging.

Karl Borchardt is pastor of Seattle, Wash., Advent Christian Church. From the April 1996 issue of *Contact*.

Becoming Trustworthy

John Gallagher
Presque Isle, Maine

I WENT FOR a walk in the woods just before supper. Heavy snow was still on the trees, and it was beautiful to see pure white snow everywhere. It gave me a sense of cleanness, peace, and tranquility. As I continued to walk deeper into the woods I became more wrapped up in what was around me than in what I had left behind. Amazing what a walk can do, isn't it?

The heavy snow had bent the trees low to the ground, and a few had broken branches under the weight. As I walked I had to shake some of the snow from branches and smaller trees to pass. While they would lift a bit, they still remained bent.

Sometimes we can get bent out of shape too! When we do, we begin to bend the trust God wants us to have in him, and each other. Proverbs 3:5 says, "*Trust in the Lord* with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." God wants us to trust him—all the time. Trust isn't something God earns, we are simply called to trust him. Trust—not worry, not complaint not compromising the Word because results aren't fast enough.

We are also called to trust others because we love them. In 1 Corinthians 13:7 we read, "It (love) always protects, *always trusts*, always hopes, always perseveres." Since love is an obligation for us as believers then always trusting must be as well.

I know, you're thinking, "God I can trust. It's people I'm not so sure about." This raises two questions: What kind of person is trustworthy, and what must I do to be a trustworthy person for others? Let me suggest the following principles to answer both questions: People are trustworthy when:

They exercise unfailing love:

Psalm 13:5: "But *I trust in your unfailing love;* my heart rejoices in your salvation." David says he trusts God's unfailing love. When we seek to love others unfailingly as God loves us, we can be trusted.

God works powerfully through their lives:

Exodus 14:31: "And when the Israelites saw the great power the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and *put their trust in him and in Moses* his servant." The people trusted Moses because of what God did through him. When God is working through our lives, we can be trusted.

There is a visibly close relationship with the Lord:

Exodus 19:9: "The Lord said to Moses, 'I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, *so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you.*'" Then Moses told the Lord what the people had said. God knew the people would trust Moses if they knew of his intimate relationship with God. As we stay rightly related to Christ we can be trusted.

Their words give life:

Psalm 5:9: "Not a word from their mouth can be trusted; their heart is filled with destruction. *Their throat is an open grave;* with their tongue they speak deceit." Words can destroy and kill (be an "open grave"), or words can give life. We can be trusted when our conversations are life-giving.

They are faithful:

1 Corinthians 4:2: "Now it is required that *those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*" Trustworthy people are faithful people; faithful to God, his Word, his people. When we are faithful in doing God's will, as we understand it, we can be trusted.

Does this seem impossible? It is not, and the benefits are worth it. Daniel was sent to the lion's den for his faith. He was surrounded by lions all night. The next morning he was removed from the pit without a scratch on him. How is this possible? Daniel 6:23 says, "The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, *because he had trusted in his God.*"

Daniel trusted God. If you want

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Is Your Home Safe and Secure?

William Batson
Kennebunk, Maine

I HAVE A vivid childhood memory of a summer electrical storm interrupting our work in the fields on my grandparents' farm in North Carolina. With lightning flashing around and the crash of thunder booming through the sky, I ran for the shelter of the "old house." Once inside I found a corner in which to sit, for I had been told to stay away from windows and doors in case a ball of lightning entered the house. That corner was a place of safety and security.

Edith Schaeffer describes the family as a shelter from the storms of life, a place of safety and security. A little girl was asked what home meant to her. She replied, "Home is the place you go when it gets dark." What a blessing it is for a child to have the security of a loving home. How sad that for too many children home is not a place of safety and security.

What conditions create insecurity for a child? Parental conflict is one. Few things are more threatening to a child than to see the people on whom his life depends frequently clashing. My wife and I have had a few combustible conversations witnessed by our children. After an impassioned session of speaking our minds, one of our daughters asked if we were headed for divorce court. We assured her we were not and nothing we said would stop us from loving each other or her. Resolving differences in a loving manner teaches a child how to positively handle conflict in his own life.

A lack of clear boundaries for behavior is another condition that creates insecurity. Children need some rules for life in order to enjoy a sense of well-being. They may balk, complain, and even accuse us of treating them unfairly. But secretly, they are pleased because the boundaries give them a sense of Mom and Dad's loving care.

Our homes can become places where each of us feels loved, accepted, and secure.

The absence of parents inhibits a child's sense of security. I heard a news story of a six-year-old who, upon waking on Christmas morning, found no presents and no mother. Thinking Santa Claus had been involved in a terrible accident, he called the "911" emergency number to report his concern about Santa and his mom. The police officer assured him that Santa was not harmed and would soon be there. Other officers quickly gathered up what toys they could find. Dressed in a Santa suit, one of them delivered the toys to the child and a younger sister.

Where was Mom? She had left the children alone to be with her boyfriend. That's an extreme case but not far from the experience of too many children. The absence of parents in the crucial formative years is a growing problem as increasing numbers of children are placed in day-care centers. Our material priorities must be balanced with the effect they have on our child's sense of security.

A child is crushed if he thinks his parents do not like him, do not have time for him, or did not want him in the first place. A sense of belonging is essential for a child's security and feelings of worth.

How are feelings of belonging generated? John M. Drescher advises that a family do things together, share common concerns, and trust each other with responsibilities. Keep the person rather than the gifts central when celebrating birthdays. Offer prayers for the children in their presence. Value their opinions and include them in the serious and fun experiences of the family.

We can build a secure environment for our children by turning the preceding negative conditions into positive statements. As we do, our homes will become places where each of us can feel loved, accepted, and secure—a shelter from the storms of life. ❑

William Batson is associate pastor for family ministries at the Advent Christian Church in Kennebunk, Maine. From the February 1996 Kennebunk Caller.

The Parable of the Yorel

Clayton Blackstone
Bangor, Maine

FISHERMEN on Maine's rugged seacoast fish for lobsters in fiber glass-hulled boats these days, a certain sign of changing times. The hulls arrive at a boatbuilder's shop pre-formed, ready to be fitted with engine and instrumentation, deck and cabin. The buildings reek with the fumes of resin and fiberglass. And the finished product...Well, let's just say, it's a finished product. Adequate. Low maintenance. Cheaper to build. Today, fiberglass may reign as king of the commercial and recreational boating industry, but through artisan's eyes, its rule lacks the glory of what once was.

Once upon a time, craftsmen fashioned vessels of wood. The natural scent of oak danced in the nose. Sawdust and shavings blanketed the shop floor. Planking was heated and carefully bent to the curve of the hull. These miracle woodworkers meticulously fitted each piece of timber and decking then chiseled strips of batting into the gaps between planks. No preforms. No covering of mistakes with some mysterious compound from hades.

Few build boats like that anymore. But there are some. If you can afford the cost of a wooden yacht, you'll want to inspect the handiwork of the G.I. Hodgdon Company in East Boothbay, Maine. The family's been in the shipbuilding business for nearly two centuries. Timmy's the president now. Caleb, his great-great grandfather opened the shop in 1818. One of their more recent pride and joys—the *Yorel*. The construction log begins: "1984: *Yorel* 85-foot power yacht under construction." Over the following years, the entries continue: "1985, 6,660 total man hours," and more entries for 1986, 1987, and up to 1988, "74,234 man-hours." And, in 1989, "The *Yorel* left for Florida."

God chose a way which has never lost its glory in two thousand years and two thousand years from now will still cause angels to marvel at redemptive craftsmanship.

And that's one difference between fiberglass and wood. Hours and hours of time. Master craftsmanship measured against "good enough for government work."

Clione, another Hodgdon-built schooner, serves as the flagship of the Key West Maritime Historical Society. Launched in 1904, she cuts a mean swath in the deep blue waters of the Caribbean. And thanks to the care of the dedicated owners, she still looks graceful at age 92.

The *Yorel* and the *Clione*—tributes to people willing to do it right no matter how long it took. That's how they build a wooden boat in Maine.

"Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals." God's judgment against the serpent cut to the chase. Not only would he crawl on his belly and eat dust, but hostility would exist between him and the woman's child. "He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel," God said (Genesis 3:14-15).

And then our ancestors and the serpent waited. They waited for the promise through flood and famine. Through Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, Salmon and Boaz and Obed. The people of God loved David but they were still waiting for the promise. They waited through kings ranging from the good, to the bad, to the ugly. They waited through prophets, true and false. They waited through exile. They waited through times of revival and through four hundred years of empty, haunting stillness.

And then, at just the right time—angelic announcements to Zechariah and Elizabeth; to Joseph and Mary; to shepherds and wisemen. Thirty years later the announcement of Jesus: the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy that "the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned" (Matthew 4:16).

God could have chosen another way to save us. A cheaper way. A less time-consuming way. A way

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What Makes You Right With God?

Bill Monroe
Friendship, Maine

THERE ARE multitudes of people today who seem comfortable in their relationship with God, when they ought to be alarmed because they are under God's wrath and in danger of perishing in the Day of Judgment. I fear there is a great tendency on the part of many Christians to look at the flagrant immorality, the gross sexual sins, the unashamed deceit and dishonesty, the rampant greed and violence so prevalent in our society, and think, "I'm glad I don't do those things. I'm really a great person." When we think in this way, we are much like the self-righteous Pharisee in the parable that Jesus told in Luke 18:9-14.

In comparing himself with others who lived around him, and especially to the tax collector standing next to him, this Pharisee knew he must be right with God. After all, he had all the right beliefs about God, and was disciplined in the practice of his religion. He prayed, he fasted, and he tithed faithfully. In his prayer he even thanked God that he was so good—he was not a robber, an evil doer, or an adulterer.

The tax collector on the other hand was much aware of his sinfulness. It was a given that those who were in his profession were extortionists and we can be sure he had done his share of dishonest things. We hear the tax collector pleading for mercy as a sinner. Instead of comparing himself with others, he knew he did not measure up to the requirements of a righteous and holy God. So we hear him pleading with God for mercy as a sinner. One translation brings out the force of his prayer: "God, have mercy on me, *the* sinner."

It is interesting that Jesus said that it was the tax collector who went home justified and right with God; not the self-righteous Pharisee. You may feel good about your spiritual performance. When you compare yourself with others it seems certain that God is well pleased with your performance. But, friends, that is what Satan wants you to think! He wants you to trust in anything but the righteousness of Christ and his mercy.

Take a moment to ponder the question again, "What makes you right with God?" In what do you trust? In your own good works in comparison with others? Or, in the great mercy of God exposed through Jesus Christ because you know you are a sinner before him? It is faith alone in the perfect righteousness of Christ that makes us right with God! Only those who acknowledge their sinfulness can rejoice in the grace of God's forgiveness, and be right in his sight.

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." ❑

Bill Monroe recently retired after thirteen years as senior pastor of Friendship, Maine, Advent Christian Church. From the May/June 1996 *Coastline Fisher.*

There are multitudes of people today who seem comfortable in their relationship with God, when they ought to be alarmed because they are under God's wrath and in danger of perishing in the Day of Judgment.

Trustworthy from page 11

to survive the lions in your life, trust God. Trust God to shut the mouths of the lions in your life. Trust God to keep you safe from those lions in your heart that would devour your being trustworthy. If you want to reach out to others in the lion's den, be someone they can trust. If you are looking for someone to trust, look for these qualities and you can't go wrong. ❑

John Gallagher is senior pastor of State Road Advent Christian Church in Presque Isle, Maine.

Justified by Faith

Carl Rundgren
Northwood, N.H.

OF ALL THE words found in the vocabulary of the Christian, *justification* is perhaps the most appropriate to consider as this year now rolls toward the finish. *Justification* has to do with our sins. Sins, whether we call them by that name or any other, are what concerns us on January first. The whole idea behind New Year's resolutions is the human need to stop doing something perceived as wrong, and to start doing something perceived as right.

Unfortunately, in our relativistic society most people are content to leave the determination of right and wrong up to the individual. The idea of each person setting his own standard of righteousness is appealing. The only problem they have is that most people have not yet eradicated their consciences. Deep down inside themselves, they know there is an absolute standard of right and wrong. They may raise more of a ruckus when they see someone else break that standard than when they themselves do, but they know the standard is there.

Sadly, New Year's Day will not address the occasions when that standard has already been broken. It may be admirable to try changing ourselves for the better. But what do we do with the sins we have already committed? How do we deal with the guilt caused by unkind words spoken in anger, white lies, broken relationships that lead to broken marriages and children, cheating in school or in the workplace, or whatever else might cause us grief about ourselves. There is no joy in successfully keeping a New Year's resolution if we stand condemned by the things we have already done.

Being forgiven by the people we have hurt is important. But what of God, who set the standard of righteousness in the first place? The Puritans, and those who follow their example, asked of those who came to them for counsel, "Do you know that your sins have been forgiven?" The answer to this question tells much about where a person stands with Jesus Christ. Only the one who has personal knowledge of Jesus Christ and why he came into the world can say, "Yes, I know that my sins have been forgiven."

Forgiveness is wonderful. But God goes one step further in the lives of those whose trust is in him. *Justification* is that further step. Not only does God forgive those who come to him through Jesus Christ; he also justifies them! They become, in God's eyes, just as if they had never sinned!

It may well be that a person who seriously approaches his New Year's resolutions might be able to secure the forgiveness of those he has wronged. He might even have a measure of success in turning over a new leaf. But he will never secure the forgiveness of God apart from acknowledging his need of what Christ accomplished on the cross; nor can any New Year's resolution declare him innocent in the eyes of God! "If we have been justified through faith, then we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). ❑

Carl Rundgren is pastor of Northwood, N.H., Advent Christian Church.

Yorel

from page 13

"good enough for government work." But in the end, it would have ended in a fiberglass landfill somewhere. However, God chose the way of the *Yorel* and the *Clione*. The way of time. The way of unspared cost. The way of exacting craftsmanship. The way which has never lost its glory in two thousand years and two thousand years from now will still cause angels to marvel at redemptive craftsmanship.

"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart God has raised him from the dead..."

A plan. A birth. A death. A resurrection. A confession. That's how God builds a life that lasts. ❑

Clayton Blackstone is pastor of the Bangor, Maine, Advent Christian Church.

Make Missions Come Alive for Children

Angela L. Weaver

WHEN SHE WAS four years old, Jill Johnstone's British godmother gave her a children's prayer book. On the cover was a picture of an African boy dressed in a striped blanket. From that time on, Jill knew that she wanted to tell African children about Jesus, and in 1992, while battling cancer, Jill finished writing her own children's prayer book about missions, *You Can Change the World* (Zondervan, 1992). She hoped children would read it and develop a heart for missions like she did. When Johnstone died, her friend Daphne Spraggett continued her dream, writing a second volume, *You Can Change the World II,* containing more countries and people groups. (The second volume will be published this fall.)

Christian parents want their children to develop a desire to serve God. One of the most exciting areas of service, especially for children, is missionary service. There are many ways to get kids involved in missions and to help them learn more about this vital link between churches and the unreached world. Parents, teachers, club leaders, and churches can interest children to be involved in missions in a variety of ways, including praying for missionaries and those who don't know God, holding fundraisers, contacting mission agencies, and "adopting" missionaries.

Prayer is the most beneficial activity for both missionaries and children. Prayer brings children closer to God and reminds them of the need to preach the gospel to others, while enabling them to change their world. Johnstone saw that power firsthand while writing *You Can Change the World*. When she started writing, Albania was an atheist country. The children in her prayer club in England began to pray for the people of Albania, and soon the government was overthrown giving the people freedom to worship God. Because of those children's prayers, Albania changed so much that Johnstone had to rewrite her chapter on the country. This kind of influence will encourage children to continue praying about all their needs and make them realize their prayers are necessary.

Another way kids can get involved in missions is through **fund-raising**. This activity gives them an attainable goal. Fund-raising encourages children to learn more about the missionary they are supporting so they can inform others. Hopefully the children's enthusiasm will influence the adults in their church to get more involved.

At the end of each of the volumes of *You Can Change Your World,* is an address list of the mission agencies that work in the countries profiled. Kids can get more involved with missions by **writing to mission agencies** to ask about their work, the countries they work in, and the people with whom they work. Spraggett encourages kids to write, because many of the agencies have material designed for children.

Finally, kids can learn about missions through having direct contact with, or **"adopting" missionary families** from their church. Stories from the mission field often contain the adventure, excitement, and suspense that captivate young minds. Missionary life may seem normal to those on the field, but the fact that it happened in another country and with people completely different from themselves will excite kids and encourage them to know more. A Sunday school class or a club group can adopt a missionary by supporting through gift boxes, letters, and prayers. This relationship will benefit both the children and the missionary. The missionary will be encouraged by the children's interest and support. The children will be constantly reminded of the power of God's Word throughout the world and will develop a passion for God's kingdom that may send them to foreign fields in his service. ❑

From Zondervan Press syndicate.

Camping continued from page 8

the nearby woods, using only natural material. Each morning the cabins would go to these worship centers and have their devotions together.

Christian camping has built into it both the setting and provision for fully productive discipling. It can offer ideal environment, concentrated time periods, mature leadership, and a normal living experience for both demonstration and application.

It is an invaluable and inseparable part of the youth ministry of the local church. It is a harvest field where the seed sown throughout the year is often harvested. Camp provides a controlled atmosphere where the primary goals of Christian education and discipling can be both communicated and realized. Camp can be a recruitment and training center for young people with leadership potential. Camp gives an opportunity for mature Christians to invest something of their lives in the lives of young people.

Camp has within it a remarkable array of natural attractions and values. It offers the contemporary church one of its richest opportunities toward fulfilling Jesus' directive to make disciples! ❑

Jim Gilroy is a veteran of Advent Christian camping ministries across the denomination. He currently serves as pastor of the Savannah Advent Christian Church in Bishopville, S.C.

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come to this point because we've not carefully thought about what the Scriptures teach regarding the role of government and our relationship to it. American Christians have vacillated between one approach that sees the United States as a special nation in God's economy (the temptation of many who identify with the Christian Coalition) and another that views this nation as the source of much of the contemporary evil in our world (the view that drives many who call themselves politically liberal). History is more complex than either position allows for, and what Christians need in our day and time is careful attention to what the Bible teaches about our role and responsibilities toward government.

The writers of the New Testament, in my view, indicate that no matter what government Christians find themselves under, they are to live responsibly (pay taxes, give proper respect to governing authorities, and comply with just laws). At the same time, the New Testament makes it clear that all governing authority is temporal and ultimately subject to God's authority. As American Christians, our allegiance to the United States is at best provisional. Moreover, that allegiance must always be defined by our ultimate loyalty to God and his kingdom purposes. ❑

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

January

1 Praise God for a new year and **new opportunities** to communicate the Good News of his love expressed through Jesus Christ.

2 Pray that during 1997, God will use Advent Christian missionaries across the globe to **communicate the Gospel** in word and deed.

3 Praise God for the leadership that **Warren and Jackie Prestidge** have provided at Oro Bible College in the Philippines during the past two years.

4 Pray for **Warren and Jackie** as they return to New Zealand and seek employment there.

5 Praise God that **Jeff and Penny Vann** and their three children have had opportunity to adjust to their new surroundings in the Philippines.

6 Pray that God will use **Jeff and Penny** to train and equip future leaders as they teach at Oro Bible College.

7 Praise God for the continued effective service that **David Vignali** provides Advent Christian missions in the Philippines in his service as mission treasurer and in the many details he handles for the mission.

8 Pray that God will give **David** wisdom and strength as he serves today in the Philippines.

9 Praise God for the strategic planning work of the **International Missions Advisory Committee**.

10 Pray that God will give wisdom and guidance to World Missions Director **Harold Patterson** as he explores new ways to strengthen and expand the work of Advent Christian World Missions.

11 Praise God for the church-planting opportunity that he is providing for New Zealand missionaries **Russell and Noelle Carle** in the New Zealand community of Piha.

12 Pray that God will give **Russell and Noelle**

strength and discernment for the many ministry projects they're currently involved with.

13 Praise God for the ministry of **your pastor**.

14 Pray that God will provide **wisdom** for the spiritual leadership that your pastor provides for your congregation.

15 Praise God for the continued church-planting ministry that **Steve and Ann Lay** are providing near Kobe, Japan.

16 Pray that God will use **Steven and Ann** to touch the lives of people they come in contact with for the cause of Jesus Christ.

17 Praise God for the continued witness to the Gospel that Advent Christian congregations and pastors in **Japan** continue to have in their communities.

18 Pray for **Karen Rigney** as she serves the mission through deputation while on furlough.

19 Praise God for the continued effective ministry of **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** in the inner city of Memphis, Tennessee.

20 Pray that God will use **Francis and Lyne** to reach more young people for Jesus Christ in Memphis.

21 Praise God for several Advent Christian **urban and ethnic ministries** in key American cities.

22 Pray that God will provide guidance for members of the General Conference **Executive Council** as they prepare to meet in Charlotte in a few days.

23 Praise God for the faithfulness of **Marion Damon** and **Barbara White** as they oversee the work of Advent Christian missions in India.

24 Pray that **Marion and Barbara** will know and experience strength and power from the Holy Spirit in their ministry today.

25 Praise God today for his **grace and mercy** expressed through Jesus Christ.

26 As 1997 **Penny Crusade** material is mailed to Advent Christian congregations, pray that God will use Penny Crusade in a powerful way to educate Advent Christian young people about World Missions and provide strong financial support for missions work in the Advent Christian Church.

27 Praise God for the growth of new Advent Christian congregations in three **Baja California, Mexico** communities.

28 Pray for Mexico church planters **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez, Joel and Omega Garcia**, and **Marion and Elena Cortez**.

29 Praise God for **Desiree Ahola**'s church planting ministry in Zagreb, Croatia.

30 Pray that God will raise up Advent Christian missionaries for **India** and **Honduras**.

31 Pray that God will give strength to the staff at the Advent Christian **denominational offices** in Charlotte.

Revival continued from page 9

The principle applies to our youth ministries right now.

Why is it that youth have such an impact in times of emerging revival?

Let me give you at least two reasons: (1) Youth hold fewer presuppositions and prejudices against the notion that God can work in extraordinary ways. They have placed far fewer boundaries on what they expect God to do. At the same time, they are much more aware of their own brokenness than many adults, and much more willing to admit how they need a new work from God in their lives. This is the *internal* reason

But there's also an *external* reason: (2) Our youth are the future of the Christian enterprise, and we adults know it. *How* they respond to Christ must significantly set the agenda for the whole church. They have our hearts because they are our greatest treasure, and where our treasure is, our hearts will be also. So older Christians are inherently predisposed to actually follow our younger people if they in any sense begin to manifest a passion and proactiveness toward the things of God. "A little child shall lead them," said Isaiah.

In view of these things, how should we respond?

We must become what I term "*messengers of hope*" to our young people—the hope of God's greater work in them, in their groups, in the church, and among the nations; the greater work we call "revival." We must expand their vision beyond just personal cleansing and renewal (as important as that is). Recent renewal movements on over fifty U.S. college and university campuses, reaching down now into high schools, have focused significantly on repentance. But now they need to lay hold of where God wants them to go with their new love for Jesus—to be a blessing to the body of Christ and to the spiritually lost all around them. From Scripture, from historical accounts, and from a host of current stories, we need to build in them *confidence* in God about how much *more* Christ wants to do in them, through them, and out ahead of them.

We also need to plan and prepare as youth workers, so that we can properly shepherd and nurture and interpret the ground swell of revival among our teens as it comes. I have much more to say, but as Dr. Orr concludes in *Campus Aflame*, "The subject is inexhaustible" (p. 228). And so are the fruits of student revivals! ❑

David Bryant is founder and director of Concerts of Prayer International. From *The Network News*, the quarterly publication of the National Network of Youth Ministries.
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To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

The Christian proclamation has *always* taken place in a pluralistic world, in competition with rival religious and intellectual convictions. The emergence of the gospel within the matrix of Judaism, the expansion of the gospel in a Hellenistic milieu, the early Christian expansion in pagan Rome, the establishment of the Mar Thoma church in southeastern India—in all these situations Christian apologists and theologians, not to mention ordinary Christian believers, have been aware that there are alternatives to Christianity on offer. And that has not stopped them from preaching the good news!

—Alister McGrath

God's highest dream is not to make us rich, not to make us successful or popular or famous. God's dream is to make us right with him.

—Max Lucado

But the real Jesus Christ is, in fact, as profoundly and mysteriously near to us as our own thoughts and feelings. And he meets us not only in churches, upper rooms, and the sacred places of our lives. He also meets us when we are grimy and mean. He meets us when we have gone fishing and caught nothing. The risen Lord elects to be with us where we live and work and sweat.

—Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.

In Other Words

Ultimately, to be sure, we believe that the church will triumph in the sense of being vindicated in the coming kingdom of God. Because it has said Yes to that hope, the church must say No to all lesser hopes of influence. Precisely in the power of that Yes and No, however, lies its influence short of the final vindication. The church militant is marked by an "againstness" that is for the world. Using H. Richard Niebuhr's terms, it is an instance of "Christ transforming culture" by pointing the culture to a transformation that is beyond its own means to attain or even imagine.

—Richard John Neuhaus

I find it supremely ironic when, on the one hand, a parent worries over whether her child will be able to resist peer pressure as a teen, but on the other hand doesn't want this same child to do without anything his friends have: a prime example of one hand not knowing what the other is doing.

—John Rosemond

What we do in private has repercussions on ourselves, and what we are and believe has repercussions on others. What we do in our own homes will inevitably affect, not only our behavior outside them, but what we expect and tolerate in the behavior of others, and what we expect the rulers of our societies to tolerate.

—Henry Fairlie

It is impossible to have a moral community or nation without faith in God, because without it everything rapidly comes down to 'me,' and 'me' alone is meaningless... Great moral societies have a common belief in something beyond themselves.

—Georgie Anne Geyer

The lesson is clear: Euthanasia does its PR work under the slogan of patient choice. But in the end it leads to coercion—where medical personnel decide unilaterally who shall live and die, based on utilitarian and financial grounds. On this side of the Atlantic, we're setting up the conditions for the same progression. How? By heralding choice as the ultimate virtue.

But choice itself has no moral value. It's merely a process, an act of the will. There has to be a standard, a criterion, before we can judge whether something is a good choice or a bad choice. Empty choice, with no standards, will always end up in coercion—as the Dutch experiment with euthanasia so poignantly demonstrates.

—Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey

Sources: Alister McGrath from *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (InterVarsity Press, 1994); Max Lucado from *In the Grip of Grace* (Word, 1996); John Rosemond from *The Charlotte Observer* (8/22/96); Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. from *Assurances of the Heart* (Zondervan, 1993); Henry Fairlie from *The Seven Deadly Sins Today* (Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1977); Georgie Anne Geyer quoted by George Barna from, *The Index of Leading Spiritual Indicators* (Word, 1996); Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey from *A Dangerous Grace* (Word, 1994); Richard John Neuhaus from *The Naked Public Square* (Eerdmans, 1984).

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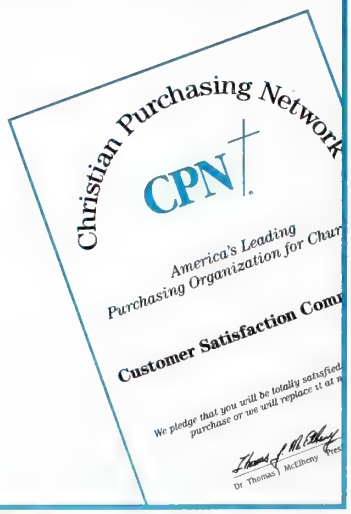




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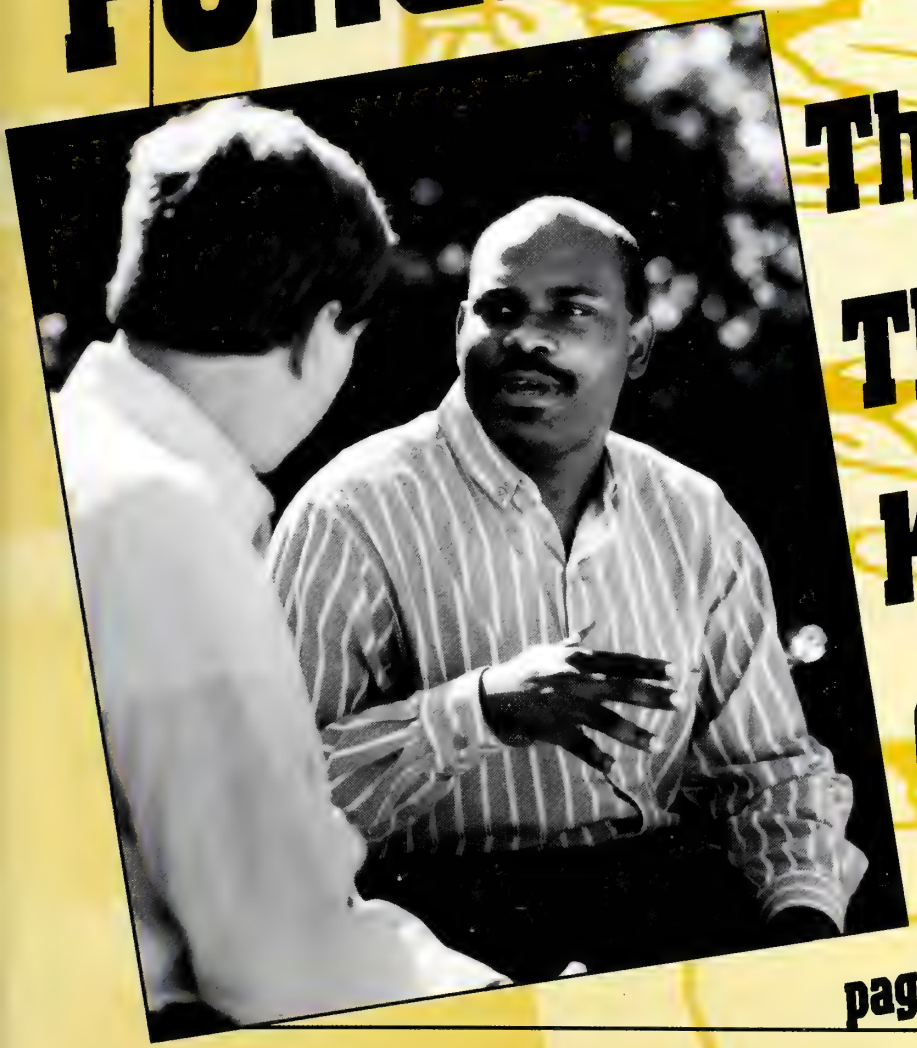
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Advent Christian
WITNESS

January/February 1997

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The Gift That Keeps On Giving

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Forgiveness is not always easy, especially if someone has hurt us deeply. But the Scriptures challenge us to "Forgive, as the Lord forgave you." In the first of a two-part article, Mark Maulding reminds us of the importance of forgiveness in our walk with Christ.

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What are the essential differences between evangelical Protestantism and Roman Catholicism? Douglas Foss explores them and reminds us that they are still important and significant.

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Roman Catholicism claims that papal infallibility rests upon a succession ordained by Jesus Christ through the apostle Peter. Bob Hewitt explores the Scripture passages used to support this idea and finds that their proper understanding involves something quite different.

A Tribute to My Dad and Mom 17

Jim Butterfield thanks his parents, Rev. Milford and Vera Butterfield, for the Christian impact they had on him and on countless other young people during Rev. Butterfield's service as pastor and denominational youth director.

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Practicing forgiveness is a vital part of Christian relationships.

photo by Jim Whitmer Photography

Volume 45, Number 1

Advent Christian Witness

Editor **Robert Mayer** Student Intern **Dawn Rutan**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria

CATHOLIC AND CHRISTIAN?

I HAVE A friend named Lisa who went to a Christian college with me. She knew that she was saved by God's grace and not by good works, and yet she loved to do things to help people whenever we had the opportunity. I admired her compassion for people in all walks of life, and she provided a good Christian example for me. It didn't matter to me that she was raised as a Roman Catholic.

Among many Protestants, there is a belief that no one who is Roman Catholic can also be called Christian. This position, in my view, is often based on a lack of understanding of Catholic beliefs and a lack of interaction with those persons who claim to be both Catholic and Christian. I think that if we take time to understand our similarities, we could more readily see that many Roman Catholics, like my friend Lisa, are brothers and sisters in Christ. Many Catholics like her do not believe that a person can be saved by good works apart from the grace of God, but that those works are the evidence of Christ working in and through them. That sounds like what most Protestants believe.

In addition to understanding the different beliefs that people hold, we need to remember that there are those within our own ranks who profess to be Christians but do not have a personal relationship with Christ. In every Christian tradition, including our evangelical Protestant one, there are those who will be saved by God's grace, as well as those to whom Christ will say, "Depart from me, I never knew you." In light of that knowledge, we all need to be active in our commission to "make disciples of all nations." This is not a Protestant or Catholic mission. It is a Christian one in which all who confess Christ as Savior and Lord need to work together. Non-Christians will learn of Christ more quickly by our cooperation with other believers than by constant accusations and dissension. We have to remember that we are not exempt from accusations ourselves, because every local church, every denomination is made up of people who sin.

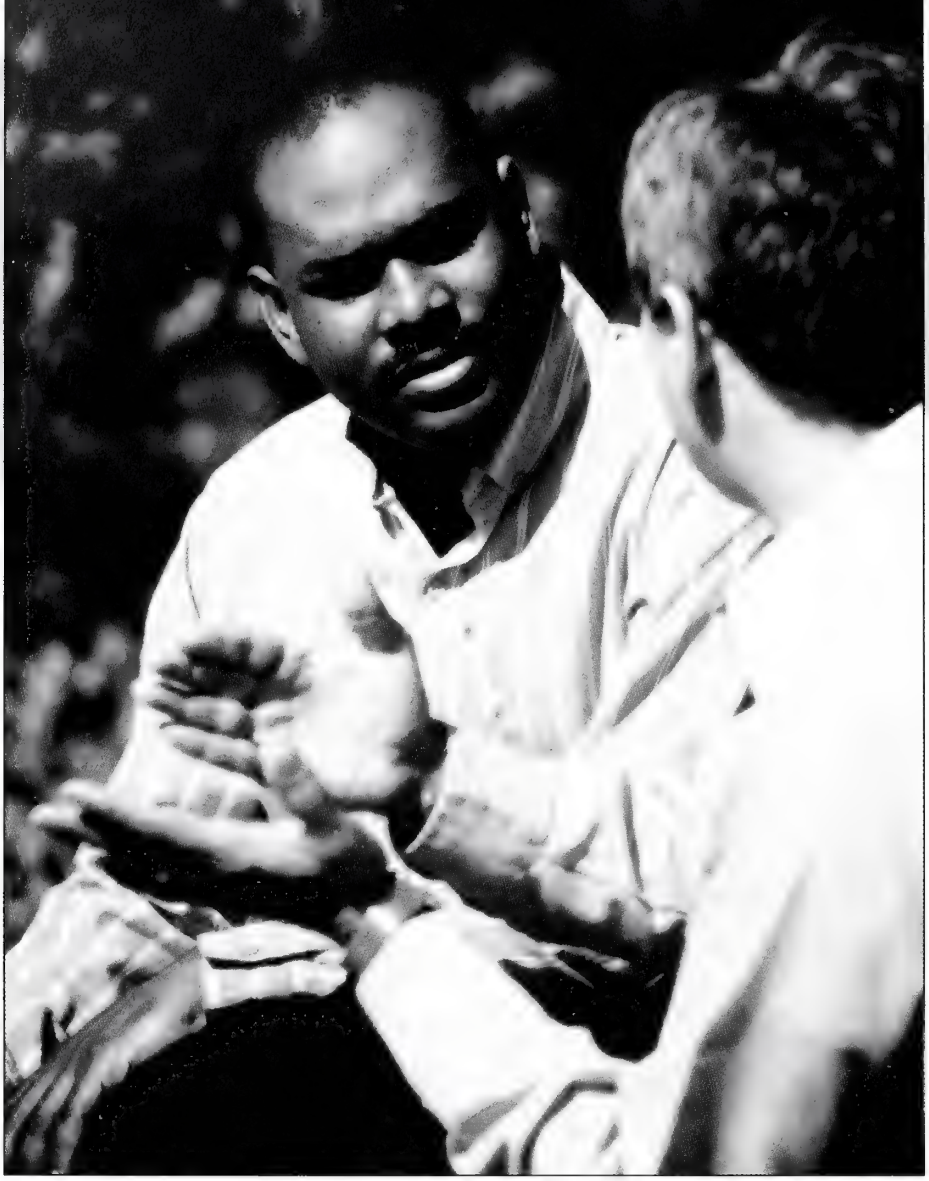
In all of these things, the key is to build loving relationships by God's grace. I have several Christian friends who grew up in the Catholic tradition, and we are committed first to Christ, and second to one another. This gives us the freedom to discuss our similarities and our differences without fear of losing the relationship. Catholics can learn much from Protestants through our strong emphasis on personal knowledge of Jesus Christ and Savior and by our commitment to understand and apply the Bible to our lives. My friend, Lisa, told me that she looked to me as a spiritual leader because she should see my commitment to spiritual growth, something she had not experienced

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EDITOR'S NOTE

THIS SCHOOL year, I've had the privilege to supervise an internship for Dawn Rutan, an Advent Christian graduate student studying at Wheaton College. You've already had the opportunity to read Dawn's work as she did much of the editing for our November '96 issue. In addition, she has been working on several projects that you will see in future issues. This month, I've asked Dawn to write the opinion column that appears on the editorial page.

Her column addresses our theme this month: an Advent Christian perspective on Roman Catholicism. Dawn hopes that we will recognize that the terms "evangelical" and "Roman Catholic" are not always contradictory. Pastor Douglas Foss, from Hope Church (A.C.) in Lenox, Mass., contributes our major theological article this month and addresses the significant differences between Protestant and official Roman Catholic understandings of salvation and justification. Doug is well-versed in Roman Catholic theology, having focused on that topic during his doctoral studies at Reformed Theological Seminary. Finally, longtime Advent Christian pastor Bob Hewitt from Kennebunk, Maine, looks at what Jesus really meant when he declared to Peter, "on this rock will I build my church." I hope you'll find the work of these three Advent Christian writers both thoughtful and challenging. May God's grace be with you throughout 1997.



The Gift that Keeps on Giving

Mark Maulding
Charlotte, N.C.

A GOOD FRIEND of mine recently went to Eastern Europe. While there, he asked a large group of Christians to list the people who had hurt them at sometime in the past. He was surprised by the responses from this group of people who had lived much of their lives under Communism. It was not the harsh Communist dictators who were at the top of their lists, but their parents. As someone who is involved in discipling people one-to-one, that kind of response no longer surprises me. In fact, I often get the same response. The reason behind this is that you and I arrive on planet earth with a God-given need to feel loved and accepted.

FOR

God has placed parents in a child's early life to provide those needs until the child becomes an adult and can receive the provision for those needs directly from him. But when parents do not love and accept their children, they grow up with feelings of rejection and hurt.

You don't have to live long before someone hurts you, do you? Somewhere along the way, someone is going to disappoint you, betray you, abuse you, lie to you, criticize you, yell at you, make fun of you, disagree with you, or reject you. No one is exempt from being hurt in this life. But God has provided his people, you and I, with a special gift. Several months ago, I spotted a sign that read, "Give a gift that keeps on giving. Give a female cat!" That's not quite what I have in mind. Instead, let me turn your attention to an even better gift that keeps on giving—the gift of forgiving people from your heart.

Deceptions about forgiveness

Forgive? "You don't know what I've had to face!" Many Christians who have been hurt know that they should forgive. But often the pain seems too great. Or they wind up believing one or more of the deceptions about forgiveness that often clutter our thinking about our relationships with others. Here are twelve deceptions about forgiveness that I and my colleagues at Grace Ministries International have seen in our work with people:

1. I know that I have forgiven someone when I no longer feel angry or hurt. (Actually, this could mean that you've only buried your memories.)

(The first of two articles

GIVENESS

2. I have forgiven because I understand why the other person hurt me. (This is simply explaining away or justifying someone's rejecting behavior toward me.)

3. Time heals. (No, it doesn't. Only authentic forgiveness heals.)

4. I have forgotten so I must have forgiven. (Again, that simply means that you have suppressed memory of the hurt.)

5. I have asked God to forgive them. (Actually, that is not your responsibility. It's theirs. And it's not the same as you forgiving them.)

6. I have asked that person for their forgiveness. (You're confusing that with your need to forgive them.)

7. I try not to think about what happened. (That involves pretense and denial on your part. It's also being dishonest with yourself.)

8. When I'm around that person, I act as if it never happened. (That's also pretending.)

9. Let's just forget it. (That is much easier said than done. And it is not authentic forgiveness.)

10. If I have truly forgiven that person, then everything would be all right between us. (This confuses forgiveness with reconciliation. There are times when we may forgive but it is not possible to reconcile with that person. Scripture tells us to be at peace with all people as much as it is possible with us. Sometimes it is not possible.)

11. I must go to that person and tell them that I forgive them. (That may make you feel better but it will probably stir up a lot of bitterness and resentment in them. Then they will need to forgive you!)

12. Forgiveness means that I must turn the other cheek and do something nice for that person. (God may ask you to do that after you forgive, but that is still not forgiveness.)

Jesus' teaching on forgiveness

Each of those deceptions can cause us to miss the importance of authentic forgiveness. As Jesus teaches us, genuine forgiveness is something that must come from your heart. In Matthew 18, the Master gives the best teaching you'll ever find about forgiving others who have hurt us. "Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven'" (Matthew 18:21-22).

Let's face it. Peter was being generous with his question. Has it been difficult for you to forgive people who have hurt you? It's tough to forgive even once. Then what about seven times. In real life, that's a lot of forgiving. Yet Jesus gave an incredible response when he challenged Peter (and us) to be willing to forgive seventy times seven times. By that time, who's counting, right? This is impossible unless Jesus forgives through us.

The Master follows with a parable that illustrates the importance of forgiving others. Take a few moments and read Matthew 18: 23-35. In this parable, you'll discover three main characters that represent the different relationships we encounter in life. First is the king who represents God. Next is a slave who owed the king a tremendous amount of money. He represents you and the debt you owe to God because of your sins. Finally, we discover another slave who owed the previous slave a very small sum of money. This slave represents the people that you feel owe you because in some way they have hurt you. In your mind, they owe you a lot.

Notice that the first slave owed the king ten-thousand talents. If you could imagining owing the IRS about ten million dollars, you'll get a picture of how large the first slave's debt actually is. There's no way you could fully pay that debt, even if you paid on it for the remainder of your life. In Jesus's time, a debtor who could not fully pay his debts was condemned to to prison. All that he had would be sold, including his wife and children, as payment on the debt.

According to Jesus, the king expressed mercy to the first slave even though he knew that the debt was essentially unpayable. And in forgiving the slave, the king actually released him from the debt. The slave no longer owed the king anything! He was debt free. That's what happens when we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. We have a sin-debt that we cannot possibly pay. But God is a gracious king and through Jesus Christ, he forgives us. Picture a chalkboard with the your name written at the top. The word "birth" is in the upper left-hand corner. At the lower

There are probably people who have hurt you so deeply that you wonder if you'll ever get over it. Forgiving them is the only way you will ever be free from the pain.

right, we read the word, "death." And in between is a column-after-column listing of your sins. When Jesus died on the cross, every one of your sins was erased. Your chalkboard was totally cleaned and the word "forgiven" was written across the board in giant letters. The moment you placed your faith in Jesus Christ and he came to live inside you, it was as if he brought with him that clean chalkboard and gave it to you as a gift.

You have been given by Jesus the gift of forgiveness for your sins—past, present, and future. That's how the apostle Paul expresses it to the Colossian Christians: "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncurcumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins..." (Colossians 2:13). All of our sins have been forgiven by Jesus Christ. The debt that we are unable to pay has been paid by our Master. Now, God wants you to pass on the forgiveness you have received from him to others who have sinned against you. That takes us to the next part of Jesus' parable.

The forgiven slave discovered that a fellow slave owed him money. In comparison to what the first slave owed the king, this debt was minuscule. His friend owed one-hundred denarii, about three months wages in those days. It would translate to about $10,000 today. Now, if someone owed you that sum today, you would be upset. That's a lot of money, but compared with the original ten million dollar debt owed to the king, it's very small.

There are people who have hurt you, people who have probably hurt you so deeply that you wonder if you'll ever get over it. It may be your parents, your spouse, your children, your boss, a friend, or a coworker. Maybe someone has hurt you by constantly criticizing you, by manipulating you, or by telling you that what you did was never good enough. Maybe they abused you physically, emotionally, even sexually. Or maybe they've hurt you by betraying you through an affair or by their coldness and lack of love. It hurts! And God wants you to forgive? Yes, he does. He does because he knows that forgiving them is the only way you will ever be free from the pain of what they did to you.

Why we avoid forgiveness

Again, look at Jesus' parable and notice that it was not that the first slave could not forgive his friend. Instead, he was unwilling to forgive. He would not forgive. That's where most people become stuck when they wrestle with God's challenge to forgive those who have hurt them. Jesus gives us the ability to forgive, but oftentimes we're unwilling.

Our unwillingness to forgive often gets translated into one of several excuses for not forgiving. Let me suggest some of those:

1. You want to punish the person who hurt you. By not forgiving them, you believe that you can hurt them. In reality, you hurt yourself and hurt the others whom you love through your bitterness when you refuse to forgive.

2. You don't feel like forgiving them. This often occurs because the pain goes very deep and to bring up the past means you have to face that pain once again. It's scary to face the pain of your past. But it's vital if you're going to discover freedom to live as God designed you to.

If that pain is especially severe, often you need a compassionate Christian pastor, counselor, discipler, or friend to help you face that pain. But after you face that painful memory, you can then realize that forgiveness is a choice of the will. It is a choice to trust that God knows what is best for you whether you feel like doing it or not.

Forgiveness is not always easy and is never meant to be trite. But unforgiveness is always tragic because of the damage it does to us

3. You view the other person's offense against you as too great to be forgiven and believe that they don't deserve forgiveness. To forgive would allow them to get away with a gross injustice and you want justice to be served.

Jesus' parable which we've just considered addresses this issue. You did not deserve God's forgiveness. You deserved his justice. Yet, God has expressed his forgiveness to you through the death of Jesus Christ. And your sin against God is far greater than anything others have done to hurt you. In one sense, you are right. Those who hurt you do not deserve forgiveness. But neither did you.

4. The offender has not asked for your forgiveness, and therefore, they do not deserve it. It would be great if everyone who hurts us would ask forgiveness. But that's not going to happen. Many people are blind to the hurts they cause and if you wait for them to ask forgiveness, you may wait your entire life. You need to forgive whether they ever ask you or not.

5. You're afraid of losing control, especially of your emotions. Authentic forgiveness involves facing your feelings and emotions. When we wrestle with forgiving another, we face our feelings of anger, hurt, betrayal, rejection. And many of us don't want to do that. We're afraid that if we forgive someone who has hurt us, we might lose control and do something like cry very emotionally.

That fear comes when we wrestle with pride. We need to forgive and

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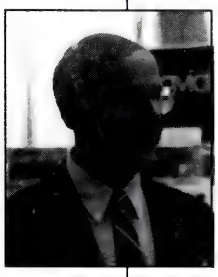
Questions and Answers

with Edward Fudge

A concerned parent writes, "My child is about to marry a very sweet person who is Roman Catholic and is studying to become a Catholic as well. I want to be as broad as the Bible, but I have always thought of Catholics as 'outside the pale' so to speak. Is my child's future spouse possibly an evangelical Christian also?"

Isn't perspective fascinating? For most of Christian history in the West, the vast majority of professing believers in Jesus were Roman Catholics who questioned the salvation of the minority who were not. Today, Catholics sing Martin Luther's hymn, *A Mighty Fortress* while Protestants sing Father F.W. Faber's *Faith of Our Fathers* and ask whether Catholics are Christian.

But what about those Catholics? The bad news is that, in some parts of the world, many of them believe and practice a lot of superstitious nonsense—some of which stands quite opposed to the gospel of justification by grace through trust in Jesus Christ. The good news is that an increasing number of Catholics, particularly in the USA and Western Europe, do not. Since Vatican 2, in fact, American Catholics have been increasingly getting into the Scriptures, focusing on Jesus, experiencing spiritual renewal, and looking a great deal more like the kind of Christians with which we are more accustomed.



Even better news is that God doesn't deal with people by church affiliation, but on an individual basis as he sees the heart. And the best news of all, of course, is that Scripture assures us more times than one that no person who puts saving trust in Jesus Christ will be left hanging out to dry (my paraphrase).

The management team at my law firm includes a Roman Catholic lady who thinks, talks, and prays just like the rest of us (Baptist, Presbyterian, Bible church, and Churches of Christ) on the fundamentals. I have no doubt that she is as fine a Christian as I am. And God, who alone knows our hearts, might rate her far ahead.

It is sobering for me to remember that for many, many centuries, most of God's people in the Western hemisphere did not have any viable option to a very superstitious and sometimes corrupt ecclesiastical Roman Catholicism. Nor did they have Bibles in their own language—and they could not have read them if they had. Yet they served God and worshipped him in the only way they knew. Will God take all that into account when he finally judges them? I must suppose that he will.

I don't know how small a mustard seed is, but Jesus made the point from it that little faith indeed can take hold of the God who already is reaching out to us first. Thank God, our salvation finally does not depend on our own ability to do, think, or experience anything successfully, but on the certain ability of a loving, sovereign God to grasp us and hold on!

If we keep our hand in the one that bears the nail scars, we may be very sure that he will never, ever leave us or forsake us. And that, in the end, does not depend on the name on the sign above the church-house door.

Is the Lord present when we participate in the Communion?" queries a learned Bible teacher in West Texas. "If so, is he present in some way other than 'really' present? If so, what way would that be? Perhaps our language is the hindrance here. So, why not call the bread and wine what Jesus and Paul called it, namely, the body and blood of Christ?"

Can't we leave some room here for sheer mystery? Why do we think we have to be able to explain everything? I cannot explain what it all means, but I still love to say, when presiding at the Eucharist:

"The body of Christ, the bread of heaven. Take this and eat it in remembrance that Christ's body was given for you, and feed on him in your hearts, by faith, with thanksgiving."

"The blood of Christ, the cup of salvation. Take this and drink it in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you. And be thankful."

I fear that many evangelical Protestants have focused so narrowly on the "Sola Fide" ("faith alone") of the Reformation that they neglect or even despise the physical elements by which Christ promises to encounter his believing people, whether the water of baptism, the bread and wine of Communion, or the anointing oil in praying for the sick. This over-reaction to sacerdotalism borders on the ancient gnostic heresy which denied that deity became flesh in the man Jesus Christ. Faithfulness to Christ's

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PROTESTANTS CATHOLICS

Do the Theological Differences Still Matter?

Douglas Foss
Lenox, Mass.

WAS THE Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century simply a skirmish over minor doctrinal misunderstanding between people of common faith? Or was it a legitimate and much-needed protest over the abuse, distortion and perversion of the one genuine gospel of Jesus Christ? In light of at least one recent document, the 1994 *Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT)*, it would appear that many Evangelicals and Roman Catholics would consider the Reformation nothing more than an internal family quarrel without much religious or eternal significance.

Why the Reformation?

Of the fifteen contributors to *ECT*, eight were evangelicals while the remaining seven were Roman Catholic. *ECT* was a clear attempt at summarizing Roman Catholic and Evangelical concerns on social issues like abortion, pornography, euthanasia, and general societal corruption. However, a glaring problem with *ECT* is its apparent trivialization and minimizing of the cardinal issue of the Protestant Reformation, namely salvation by means of faith alone in the Person of Jesus Christ. The relegating of the true gospel to the inconsequential for the sake of unity is seen throughout this document.

For example, under the heading, "We Witness Together," it is assumed that both Roman Catholics and Evangelicals are disciples of Christ, and it is categorically stated that Christians (Roman Catholics and Evangelicals) are to refrain from proselytizing one another. These statements at face value reveal a gross and unfortunate misunderstanding of the Protestant Reformation. They are at the least presumptuous, and are at best alarming. If this section of *ECT* is to be believed and accepted as the norm for Christian thinking and behavior, then there would have been no need for the Protestant Reformation to begin with.

The very doctrines of Roman Catholicism that the Reformers fiercely protested in the sixteenth century are the identical doctrines and issues of twentieth-century Roman Catholicism. In fact, the Reformers were thoroughly and unapologetically committed to evangelizing Roman Catholics for they were persuaded by Scripture that medieval Catholicism had embraced a distortion of the true gospel of justification by faith alone.

The Protestant Reformation was concerned with the most critical question anyone will ever ask: "How does an individual achieve right standing with God?" To phrase it another way, "How is a sinful individual justified before an all-holy God?" This was the question that shook the foundation of Christianity and which ignited the flame of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. The issue of justification by faith, which concerns itself with the ground and basis of one's salvation, continues to be the most important issue of division between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism today. The sixteenth-century Reformer Martin Luther claimed that if the doctrine of justification be lost, "then is also the doctrine of truth, life, and salvation, also lost and gone." John Calvin declared

the doctrine of justification the "hinge of the Reformation." The Reformers of the sixteenth century were adamantly opposed to the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification to be a denial of the genuine gospel of Jesus Christ, and if believed it would result in eternal loss of one's soul.

How are we justified before God?

How is an individual justified before God? Is it, as Roman Catholicism taught and continues to teach, through a complex system of sacramental conformity, of which obtaining merit through indulgences and good works play a significant role? Or is right standing (justification) with God, as Luther taught and which modern day reformed Protestantism maintains, achieved by means of faith alone in the person and work of Jesus Christ? The dispute was not whether the doctrine of justification by faith was scriptural; rather it was over the definition of the doctrine. The quarrel centered around the ground and essential nature of justification.

The Catholic Encyclopedia defines justification as "the possession of sanctifying grace. and before this possession [of sanctifying grace] can be accomplished there must be baptism and this is preceded by faith and acceptance of the consequences of belief." Roman Catholicism teaches the means or instrument of justification is baptism. That is, justification is applied to the sinner through the waters of baptism, and hence he is adopted into God's family. In opposition to Luther's contention that justification was by means of faith alone, the Council of Trent (1545-63) issued a firm rebuttal by clearly stating "the instrumental cause is the sacrament of baptism which is the sacrament of faith, without which no man was ever justi-

What is "Evangelicals and Catholics Together?"

ONE OF THE most surprising developments in American Christianity during the 1990s has been the 1994 statement "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" (ECT), and the huge amount of discussion and debate it has produced both among Roman Catholics and evangelicals in the United States. What exactly is "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" and how did it come about?

ECT is an unofficial declaration, not produced or endorsed by the Roman Catholic Church or any Protestant denomination or organization. The statement was crafted by a group of evangelical and Roman Catholic pastors and theologians who shared common social concerns, especially in terms of the pro-life movement in the United States. That group had also become deeply concerned about the growing tension and conflict between Roman Catholics and evangelicals in Mexico and other Latin American countries. In the words of Charles Colson (an evangelical) and Richard John Neuhaus (a Roman Catholic), while their discussions about these issues had been productive, "How could we speak a useful word to our brothers and sisters elsewhere if we had not in a more careful and comprehensive way addressed our relationship with one another here in North America?"

Colson, Neuhaus, and the other signers of ECT hoped that the declaration would be the beginning of ongoing conversations between evangelicals and Roman Catholics that would explore the areas where they agree and define the areas where they disagree. Since its release on March 29, 1994, the document has sparked a lot of discussion and debate on both sides. Most evangelicals (and many Roman Catholics) have appreciated the call for evangelical-Roman Catholic cooperation to "resist proposals for euthanasia, eugenics, and population control that exploit the vulnerable, corrupt the integrity of medicine, deprave our culture, and betray the moral truths of our constitutional order." And most have welcomed the strong defense of religious freedom as the foundation for authentic democracy?

But do evangelicals and Roman Catholics agree "that we are justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ" as ECT asserts? While ECT represents an honest attempt to wrestle with differences between evangelical and Roman Catholic understandings of the Christian faith, a significant number of evangelical pastors and theologians believe that ECT does not take those differences seriously enough especially in terms of the important Christian doctrine of justification by faith.

While "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" is too long for us to print in this issue, you can find a copy of this important statement in the book *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission*, edited by Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus (Word Publishing, 1996). Or, if you have internet access, go the the website for the magazine *First Things* (http://www.firstthings.com) and locate the May 1994 issue.

—Bob Mayer

From a Catholic perspective, God must first make the sinner righteous before he can justify him. Rome teaches, "We have to labor and strive to fulfill all the obligations imposed on us by God. Mere acceptance of Christ without that is of no avail."

fied." Roman Catholic apologist Karl Keating states in *Catholicism and Fundamentalism* that "justification is a rebirth" which occurs at baptism.

According to Catholic theology, in the sacrament of baptism a supernatural work of rebirth (born again) occurs as the candidate's soul is infused with sanctifying grace. Rome affirms that "sanctifying grace is a created supernatural gift" which God infuses into the sinner's soul in order to justify him. Sanctifying grace may be killed or "lost through mortal sin," and can only be reclaimed through the sacrament of penance. According to Rome, for any to ultimately acquire eternal life, sanctifying grace must be retained throughout their temporal lives. Catholic theologian Sheed states, "When we come to die there is only one question that matters—have we sanctifying grace in our souls? If we have not, then to heaven we cannot go."

In response to Luther's assertion of the doctrine of imputed righteous (imputation), the Catholic Church insisted on their doctrine of infused righteousness (infusion). Rome's doctrine of infusion must be grasped if one is to achieve an understanding of the rationale for salvation, because by their own admission salvation is something for which man must labor. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that "good works inspired by love of God and performed by one in God's grace and friendship do contribute towards one's salvation."

Roman Catholic theology argues that God infuses (pours) the created and supernatural gift of sanctifying grace into the heart of the sinner at baptism, who then actually becomes truly righteous. Hence, since he has become righteous, God can genuinely justify him. In other words, from a Catholic perspective, God must first make the sinner righteous before he can actually justify him. And now, because the sinner *is* righteous, the sinner is able from that righteousness to produce good works which actually merit eternal life.

The Catholic Church teaches, "the good works of the just establish a legal claim (*meritum de condigno*) to reward on God." In other words, because the sinner is *made* righteous, God must be true to character and reward that which is righteous—thus the obligation is imposed. This is precisely why Karl Keating declares that once God justifies a person, his "soul becomes objectively pleasing to God and so merits heaven. It merits heaven because now it is actually good." The soul has become good, asserts Keating, because there has been a "true eradication of sin and a true sanctification and renewal." According to Rome, an annihilation of sin has occurred within the sinner, therefore his good works acquire a claim to supernatural reward from God. The Council of Trent taught that for the justified, eternal life is both "a grace mercifully promised to the sons of God and a reward for his own good works and merits."

Righteousness by faith alone

In answer to the Roman Catholic doctrine of *infusion*, Protestants espoused the doctrine of *imputation*. Rather than God making the sinner inherently righteous, Protestants maintained that God declared or considered the sinner to be righteous on the basis of Christ's righteousness which is imputed (credited) to him. Luther taught, as does the Bible and traditional Protestantism, that God does not have to first make the sinner good in order to justify him, for as Romans 4:5 clearly teaches, God "justifies the ungodly." And the justification of the ungodly (not the righteous) is by means of faith alone, for as Romans 3:28 declares "a man is justified by faith, apart from works of the Law."

The Westminster Confession of Faith gives a clear definition of the Protestant understanding of justification when it declares that "justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which he pardoneth all their sins, accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in his sight; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone."

Karl Keating in *Catholicism and Fundamentalism* confuses the Reformers' view of justification, and specifically Luther's quote, "*simul justus et peccator*" (the same time just and sinner), when he asserts, "The Reformers saw justification as a mere legal act by which God declares the sinner to be *meriting* [emphasis mine] heaven even though he remains in fact unjust and sinful." Although Luther unequivocally envisioned the believer to be at the same time considered just and

sinful before God, he in no way understood the sinner to be *meriting* [emphasis mine] heaven even though he remains in fact unjust and sinful." Although Luther unequivocally envisioned the believer to be at the same time considered just and sinful before God, he in no way understood the sinner to be *meriting or* earning heaven. In fact this was and is the very heart of the debate.

Church historian Philip Schaff delineates the distinction between the Protestant and Roman Catholic concepts of justification when he states, "in the Catholic system justification (*dikaisosis*) is a gradual process conditioned by faith and good works; in the Protestant system it is a single act of God, followed by sanctification. It is based upon the merits of Christ, conditioned by faith, and manifested by good works."

The place of good works

In opposition to Protestantism's claim that justification was a singular event in time, followed by the necessary fruit of sanctification, Roman Catholicism was defending justification as an ongoing process, beginning with the sacrament of baptism, maintained through the sacrament of penance, strengthened though the sacrament of the Eucharist (communion), and continuing until death. Rome teaches, "We have to labor and strive to fulfill all the obligations imposed upon us by God. Mere acceptance of Christ without that is of no avail."

Rome's conception of justification as a process is evident in the *Decree of Justification* penned during the sixth session of the Council of Trent in 1547, which states that justification "is not only a remission of sins *but also* [emphasis mine] the sanctification and renewal of the inward man..." According to Rome, transformation of one's character and inner renewal are indispensable, fundamental, and mandatory requirements for any to maintain justification and thus earn heaven. This is why the Roman Catholic Church taught and continues to espouse, "it would be incompatible with the veracity and the sanctity of God that he should declare the sinner to be justified, if he remains in reality sinful." Works therefore fulfill a necessary and inescapable function in meriting ultimate salvation.

In their book *Radio Replies*, Fathers Rumble and Carty explain, "it is not enough to believe in the finished work of Christ by simple faith in order to secure eternal salvation in heaven with him." They further comment that works are necessary to achieve right standing before God by asserting, "we do need, beside good works, both faith and charity. But not for a moment does St. Paul mean that a man is saved by faith only, to the exclusion of good works."

Protestants and any who maintain that works are not a necessary cause of salvation or are not needed to accrue sanctifying grace but rather flow out of salvation (fruit), have been anathematized (cursed) by the Roman Catholic church in Canon Law number twenty-four: "if anyone says that the justice received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works, but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of its increase, let him be anathema."

The evidence of authentic faith

Although the Reformers affirmed one was justified by faith alone apart from any works and that works had no meritorious effects, they in no way discounted or devalued the necessity of good works in the life of the believer. Martin Luther and the Reformers were cognizant of Rome's charge of license and antinomianism. This is the reason Luther declared, "We are justified by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone." Authentic faith will and must evidence itself in good works.

John Calvin also demonstrates the close relationship between faith and works when he declares, "For we dream neither of a faith devoid of good works nor of a justification that stands without them." And again Calvin writes, "Yet you could not grasp this [Christ's righteousness] without at the same time grasping sanctification also. Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify." The Reformers taught that good works (sanctification) would inevitably and immediately follow the act of justification. Although the Reformers realized there is a sense where justification and the beginning of sanctification occur simultaneously, they maintained works do not contribute to the securing of eternal life.

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The Protestant Reformation was a challenge to turn from all personal effort, goodness, and virtue to save oneself, and trust in Christ alone for one's eternal salvation. It was a protest against the distortion of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Keys of the Kingdom

Robert C. Hewitt
Kennebunk, Maine

"I WILL GIVE you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19).

These famous words have been the cause of one of the most spirited arguments between the two great wings of Christendom, Catholic and Protestant, ever to arise. Exactly what do they mean? This is the question to which we address ourselves.

Actually, it's impossible to understand this text apart from the eighteenth verse which precedes it: "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18).

Upon these two verses the Roman Catholic Church bases its proudest and most exclusive claims: (1) That Jesus founded the church upon Peter as the first pope or head of the church; (2) That the Roman Catholic Church is the only true Church of Christ, her priesthood the only true Christian ministry, and her sacraments the only valid vehicles of grace; (3) That the Roman Catholic Church is the only sure ark of salvation, in conformity with the dictum "Ex ecclesia nulla salus," meaning "no salvation outside the church."; (4) That Christ gave to Peter "the power of the keys," and the power to remit and retain sin; and that this power passes from Peter and his successors to the Roman priesthood and to them only. Also, that they exercise this "power of the keys" through the sacrament of penance and priestly absolution.

Now, if these exalted claims are true, the sooner we Protestants know it the better. On the other hand, if they are false, then the sooner everybody knows about it, the better. Therefore, we need to look at two questions: (1) What is the "rock" on which Jesus founded his church? (2) What is the "power of the keys" and who exercises it?

What is the "rock" on which Jesus founded his church?

The answer depends upon three things. First, it depends upon the fact that Jesus was drawing a contrast between Peter, on the one hand, and the true "rock" on the other. This is clear when we consider the careful use Jesus made of two words—"Petros" and "petra"—which while very similar, nevertheless mean two significantly different things.

The name "Peter," of course, is one which Jesus himself had given Simon. Now "Peter" is "Petros" meaning a stone or detached fragment of rock. If Jesus had wished to say that he would build his church on Peter as a rock, he would have said, "You are Petros and on this petros I will build my church." But he didn't say that. Instead, he said, "You are Petros and on this petra I will build my church."

Now "petra" meant a huge rock, a cliff; and especially with the definite article before it, as here, it meant "the rock." In other words, "petra" referred to the rocky substratum of the soil; what we would call "bedrock" (the rock on which the wise man of Matthew 7:24-30 built his house). There is, of course, a play on words here. But through this , Jesus is clearly saying that not on any detached fragment or rolling stone will the master build his church, but rather on the mighty bedrock beneath the soil of life.

Second, the meaning of these words depends upon the situation that called them forth. Jesus had just asked, "Who do you say I am?" And Peter had just replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). This was the first clear statement by any of the disciples that Jesus was the Christ. In fact, it was the first Christian creed. And Jesus both welcomed it and warmly commended Peter for it. "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church."

What rock is this? Obviously it has some connection with the good confession Peter has just given, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." These words were spoken to

"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven..." (Matthew 16:18-19).

Peter, not as an individual or future pope, but as the first proclaimer of faith in Jesus as the Christ. Actually, Peter's confession is more important here than Peter himself.

Third, our understanding of the "rock" must also depend upon what Scripture teaches elsewhere concerning the church's one foundation. Certainly the apostle Paul never looked upon Peter as the rock foundation of the church. When Paul talked about "the church's one foundation," his thought moved in a different direction entirely. Here it is in 1 Corinthians 3:11: "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." And again in Ephesians 2:19-22, Paul declares that the church is a spiritual temple, in which all of us as Christians are spiritual stones built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with "Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone."

Now, notice closely. If Peter was the foundation on which the church was built, then Peter himself seemed to know nothing about it. Twice he referred to the Lord Jesus as himself being the cornerstone of the Christian temple. In Acts 4, making his defense before the chief priests and the Sanhedrin when he was arrested for healing the lame man, Peter identified Jesus as "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:11-12). And again, many years later, Peter makes the same identification in his first letter, "For in Scripture it says: See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame" (1 Peter 2:6).

From all of this teaching, there is only one reasonable and inescapable conclusion: First, Christ is himself "the church's one foundation." In effect Jesus said, pointing to Peter, "You are a stone," and then pointing to himself, "and this is the bedrock on which I will build my church." And that bedrock is Jesus Christ himself, as reflected in Peter's confession. Second, as the first confessor of faith in Jesus Christ, Peter was the first stone to be laid upon the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. After the cornerstone was laid, he was the first stone to be built into the spiritual temple. This is the only and the true "primacy of Peter."

With this in mind, it is not at all difficult to understand what Jesus meant with his statement, "I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

What is the power of the keys and who exercises that power?

First, who exercises this spiritual power, called the keys of the Kingdom? We have already seen that when Jesus addressed the words about the "rock" and "the keys of the kingdom" to Peter, it was to the first confessor of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God. It follows, therefore, that these words belong not just to Peter, but to all who confess their faith in Jesus Christ.

This is further demonstrated by the fact that on two subsequent occasions Jesus addressed these identical words to others besides the apostle Peter. A few weeks later, Jesus repeated those words at Capernaum. This time Jesus wasn't talking to Peter, but to the twelve disciples. He specifically used the plural pronoun when he told his disciples that "whatever you bind on earth, will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18).

The second of these two occasions was on the evening of the first Easter day when Jesus appeared in the Upper Room. This time not only were the apostles there, but, as Luke tells us in Luke 24:33, other disciples were there also. If others besides the eleven were there, then undoubtedly the group included Mary Magdalene and the other women. None had been more faithful. None had been earlier to the tomb. Again, Jesus appeared in their midst. And to this mixed company, ordinary disciples as well as apostles, both men and women, Jesus repeated his commission concerning the keys. "And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven" (John 20:22-23). If these words make Peter the first pope, then there are some Presbyterian elders and devout women who are also popes. Actually, the words have nothing to do with any pope at all.

From the character of the company that was present, it is clear that if these words apply to any priesthood at all, it is the priesthood of believers,

Upon these two verses the Roman Catholic Church bases its proudest and most exclusive claims...

the priesthood the apostle John refers to in Revelation 1:6. In other words, it is the body of confessors—all those who accept the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior and confess their faith in him—that has the power of the keys and may remit or retain sins.

This leads us to the final question. What, then, is the power of the keys, and how do Christians exercise it? What are keys for? They are to open and close doors. What door, then, do these keys open? Obviously the door into the kingdom or the door of salvation. Well, then, how is this door of salvation thrown open?

Suppose we let Mark tell us. Mark, in his report of what took place on this resurrection evening, omits the words about "remitting" and "retaining" sin, and in their place he tells us that Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). There you have it! Preaching the gospel, so that people may believe in Jesus, is the key that unlocks the door of salvation. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God....For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe" (1 Corinthians 1:18; 21).

It is perfectly clear that it is by preaching the gospel and by communicating our Christian faith to others, that the door to salvation is opened. Therefore, the "power of the keys" is the power of so proclaiming the gospel of Christ that people will believe it, and will repent and know their sins are forgiven.

The promise of the keys belongs not to Peter and his supposed successors alone, nor to any priestly order, but to all Christians who make up the body of Christ. It is the church as the Lord's witness and representative that holds the keys to the kingdom, speaking with his authority and declaring his will.

Moreover, the church exercises this power through her pastors and her members alike. And whenever one of Christ's followers presents Christ to another individual and that individual believes and accepts the gospel, that Christian who presented the gospel has wielded the power of the keys and opened the door of God's kingdom to that repentant sinner. This, of course, places an overwhelming responsibility upon us as Christians. For it means that by the simple sin of neglect, we can fail to open the door of salvation to needy people. As followers of Jesus, we are called, each and every one of us, to make disciples for Jesus Christ. God grant that we shall not fail. ❑

A graduate of Aurora University, Robert Hewitt served for over forty years as an Advent Christian pastor. He and his wife, Ellen, live in Kennebunk, Maine, where Bob serves as pastor emeritus at Kennebunk Advent Christian Church.

Protestants and Catholics

Thus, Rome teaches justification is an infusion (a pouring) of sanctifying grace into the soul, received by means of baptism; while Protestants maintain it is an imputation (a crediting) or Christ's righteousness received by means of faith. While Rome asserts that justification is a process, grounded in a subjective righteousness, Protestants affirm it is a one-time event grounded in the objective righteousness of Jesus Christ. While Rome believes God makes the sinner just through a true and actual eradication of sin, Protestants believe God declares and considers the sinner just through the crediting of Christ's righteousness which covers his sin. While Catholicism asserts God justifies the sinner on the basis of what Christ has done within the sinner, Protestantism argues that God justifies the sinner on the basis of what Christ did on behalf of the sinner. These two divergent and clashing definitions of justification continue to be a source of contention, as well as a serious dividing line between the two parties to this very day.

A fundamental difference

Is there a difference between Roman Catholicism and traditional Protestantism on the issue of salvation? Absolutely! The difference is we are saved from our sin and the wrath of God either by means of faith alone in the completed work of Christ (Protestant); or by means of faith in Christ's work in addition to our own personal goodness (Roman Catholic). The difference is that we are saved either by the righteousness of Christ or our own righteousness. The difference is we are justified by Christ alone or by our works that proceed from a righteousness that God places within us.

The Protestant Reformation was not a skirmish over minor doctrinal issues. It was an appeal to flee the false gospel of trusting in Christ plus works for one's salvation. It was a call to cling to the authentic gospel of faith in Christ alone. It was a challenge to turn from all personal effort, goodness, and virtue to save oneself, and trust in Christ alone for one's eternal salvation. It was a protest against the distortion of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The untruth that one is saved by means of faith in Christ plus personal righteousness continues to masquerade as the true gospel within the Roman Catholic Church to this very day.

tell the Lord that if forgiving means that we lose control, that is OK and we will give up the right to be in control of our emotions. We can trust God to care for us even when we lose control.

The tragedy of unforgiveness

Forgiveness is not always easy. Often, after I have explained to someone their need to forgive, that person does not come back to see me. I remember a man who flew across the country to see me. When we got to discussing forgiveness, he balked. The very next day, when we were scheduled to discuss his need to forgive, he called and told me that was flying back home that morning. He was like many people I've ministered to who really struggle with forgiving people.

To practice authentic forgiveness, we need the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. Forgiveness is not always easy and is never meant to be trite. But unforgiveness is always tragic because of the damage it does to us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Let's take one more look at our parable. Jesus said that when the king saw that the slave he had forgiven would not forgive his fellow slave, he became angry and strongly rebuked his unwillingness to forgive. After all the incredible debt the king had forgiven, the first slave should have been so grateful that he would willingly offer forgiveness to his friend. But since he would not forgive, the king handed him over to the police.

Jesus concludes this parable in the following way. "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart" (Matthew 18:35). What is the Master saying here? In studying the New Testament, we must always ask two important questions: First, who is the author writing to? Second, did the events describe happen before the death and resurrection of Jesus or after? In this case, Jesus is speaking to Peter and probably the other disciples. And at this point in history, Jesus had not yet been crucified or raised from the dead.

That means that Jesus was speaking to people (his disciples included) who were sinners living under the Law. Before the death and resurrection of Christ, a person was blessed by God for keeping the Law and cursed by God for disobeying the Law. So Jesus used this parable not only to teach about the need to forgive but to show people that being eternally forgiven by God based on obeying his laws, even the law of forgiveness, is impossible. Through this parable, indeed through all of his teaching, Jesus wanted people to see their need for a Savior. The Jewish people had long hoped for their promised Messiah, the one who would free them from bondage to sin. And as Peter and the other disciples discovered, Jesus himself was that promised Messiah.

We who live on this side of the cross know that our forgiveness is dependent upon God's grace expressed through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because we place our trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven and we have the assurance of our salvation.

"Forgive, as the Lord forgave you," the Apostle Paul told the Colossian believers. Paul recognized the damage that unforgiveness can cause in our Christian lives. An unforgiving attitude can lead to depression, bitterness, and other emotional and spiritual damage. So how do we forgive? Next month, we'll explore several practical ways to practice forgiveness. ❑

Mark Maulding, his wife Ellen, and their four children live in Fort Mill, S.C. Mark directs Grace Ministries Carolinas, a ministry that focuses on pastoral counseling and on helping Christians recapture the heart of the Christian faith—God's grace as expressed through Jesus Christ.

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The Apostle Paul warns us in Galatians 5:4 that to add human work to the accomplishment of Christ would ultimately result in our eternal demise.

The Apostle said, "You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law..."

Luther understood the seriousness of arriving at an accurate understanding of justification, for he declares the following in his unassuming and modest manner: "Justification by faith is the truth of the gospel. It is also the principle article of all Christian doctrine, wherein the knowledge of all godliness consists. Most necessary it is, therefore, that we should know this article well, teach it to others, and beat it into their heads continually."

As long as there is no common ground between Catholics and Protestants on the nature of the gospel, compromise and unity between the two factions will never be realized. Let us remember that social issues upon which Roman Catholics and Protestants agree must never be allowed to overshadow the eternal issue upon which we do not agree and which was the cause for the Reformation: faith alone in the completed work of Jesus Christ. ❑

A graduate of Berkshire Christian College (B.A.) and Reformed Theological Seminary (M.A.; D. Min.), Douglas Foss is Senior Pastor of Hope Church (A.C.) in Lenox, Mass. Before coming to Hope Church, Doug served the Whitefield, N.H. Advent Christian church for seven years. His doctoral dissertation was entitled Developing a Study of Roman Catholicism for Protestants. Doug and his wife, Cindy, have three children.

Lowery Days Need Loving Action

Miriam Snow Priebe
Mechanic Falls, Maine

IN MAINE a miserable day with clouds hanging low is spoken of as being a *lowery day.* I have never heard such a day called by that name in any other place; but perhaps the name is common elsewhere. Anyway, the kind of day that is described as *lowery* happens in many places whatever it is called.

There are some days when you'd just as soon stay in bed. The wind has a mean edge to it. Rain or snow is on the way. And if you have anything to complain about or you are feeling sorry for yourself that's the day that crushes all optimism and it is *lowery* indeed!

My friend, Eleanor, has an unusual way of celebrating *lowery* days. When the day was dark and gloomy she went into action.

Eleanor had cared for elderly parents until their deaths. She married late in life and had a few years of happiness and then her husband died. She had a lot of reasons to be sorry for herself.

Because she was a faithful member of our church, Charles and I saw her every Sunday. But we also saw her many times during the week as our paths crossed at hospitals, nursing homes, and places where there was some kind of trouble. We were particularly apt to meet her on a bad day. When most folks were staying home because of the weather she was out there driving through traffic with a smile on her face.

One particularly nasty day I met her at the entrance of one of Wilmington's large hospitals. She was shaking the rain from a red umbrella. She had on a bright blue raincoat and a beautiful scarf covered her gray hair. As usual she was all smiles. Finally I got courage enough to ask her, "What are you doing out on a day like this?" She grinned and answered, "Well, I see you're out, too!"

Of course we were out. That was our work. But she didn't have to be out because she was retired. "You could be home by the fire reading a good book!" I persisted. So after awhile she told me what she did on *lowery* days.

If the day was especially bad, Eleanor got up early. "I try to wear something bright and cheerful," she said. "It helps to raise my spirits. Then I ask God to help me to know where there are three people who are lonely or discouraged—people who might welcome a visit. I don't stay long, just a few minutes."

I saw that she was carrying a long-stemmed red rosebud. "Do you always take flowers on your visits," I asked.

"Not flowers—just one flower for each person. I couldn't afford to buy a lot of flowers; but I can manage three rosebuds. The florist is a friend of mine and makes each bud look 'special' with a little sprig of baby's breath and some pretty tissue paper." She looked embarrassed. "I think the rosebud helps them to remember that *someone* came."

Eleanor died of a stroke a few years ago. I always think of her on *lowery days.* I expect that there are a lot of people who remember her, too. I wonder if anyone else has taken up where she left off and, on the next nasty day, will be driving through the rain and sleet to let some lonely person know that *someone* cares. ❑

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ordinances does not negate faith but rather expresses it.

Yet I am thoroughly evangelical, for I believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper and spiritually efficacious only when they are accompanied by confidence in the saving work which God accomplished through Jesus Christ. I insist that we must wholeheartedly repudiate as unbiblical any notion that the "sacraments" mediate grace apart from and without regard to the recipient's trust in Jesus Christ's offering of himself, once for all time, for the sin of the world. ❑

A Tribute to My Dad and Mom Rev. Milford and Vera Butterfield

THERE ARE many, whom during the course of life profess to be righteous and Christ-like, who desire to leave a legacy of servitude, kindness, honesty, integrity, forgiveness, and love. Many have failed. But Dad and Mom, in the eyes of your son, you have not. As a father and mother you have showed steadfast conviction, courage and love. As grandparents you have exemplified the honesty, integrity, and love of your families before you. As husband and wife you have shown an unquestioned love and caring devotion for all to follow. As pastor and wife only eternity will reveal the hundreds of lives changed, strengthened, and encouraged during your 50-plus years of loving service. And as a neighbor, friend, deacon and deaconess, your kind, willing, and loving spirit will always be remembered.



The joys and rewards as well as the heartaches you've shared together could fill a book. Dad, I've heard you say many times that your ministry could not have been a success without Mom and that the word helpmate doesn't adequately describe the role she has played. And Mom, your kind quiet, gentle spirit and inner strength have also had a strong effect on my life.

At a time when success is measured by everything else, you attained success in all the above by the hand of God's greatest gift—that of love.

I remember one of your favorite passages in many of your sermons, Dad, was, "Well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into

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Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E

S E E K

K N O W

March

1 Praise God for the work that **Frank Jewett, Harold Turner,** and **Aloysius Okon** were able to accomplish during their three weeks of ministry in Nigeria and Ghana.

2 Pray for Advent Christians and all Christians in **Nigeria** and **Ghana**—that God would give them strength and courage in the face of opposition they might face.

3 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Warren and Jackie Prestidge** provided in their work at Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

4 As **Warren and Jackie** have returned to New Zealand, pray that God will lead and guide them as they find new employment and new areas of service.

5 Praise God for sending **Steve and Sharon Hughes,** from United Advent Christian Church in Wilmington, N.C., to the Philippines for a special project funded in part by the Philippine government to train agricultural workers.

6 Pray for **Steve and Sharon** as they adjust to a new culture and have opportunity to interact with a number of Advent Christians in the Philippines.

7 Praise God for the volunteer service that members of the General Conference **Executive Council** give to the Advent Christian General Conference.

8 Pray that the gospel of Jesus Christ will continue to advance throughout the world.

9 Praise God for the continued ministry and service that **David Vignali** provides both in his teaching at Oro Bible College and in his oversight of matters relating to the work of Advent Christian missions in the Philippines.

10 Pray that God will give **David** strength and wisdom as he continues to serve in the Philippines.

11 Praise God that **Jeff and Penny Vann**, and their children are making the adjustment well to their first year on the field in the Philippines.

12 Pray for **Jeff and Penny** as they teach at Oro Bible College and work with Advent Christian pastors and church leaders in the Philippines.

13 Praise God for the opportunities that Asia/Pacific Area Director **George Teshera** had to encourage Advent Christian national leaders on his recent trip to India, the Philippines, and Malaysia.

14 Pray for India missionaries **Marion Damon** and

Barbara White as they continue to provide leadership and administrative oversight for the work of Advent Christian missions in that country.

15 Praise God that **Floyd and Musa Powers** have expressed their willingness to serve for six months in Japan beginning this month while **Steven and Ann Lay** are home on furlough.

16 Pray that God will use **Floyd and Musa** to touch lives for God's kingdom as they provide leadership for the new congregation on the outskirts of Kobe.

17 Pray that **Steven and Ann Lay** and their family will know God's presence in a special way during the months to come while they are home on furlough.

18 Praise God that Advent Christian ministry in **China** continues and grows, despite the difficult circumstances for many followers of Christ in that country.

19 Pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to work through Christians on the **Chinese mainland** to touch lives for God's kingdom.

20 Praise God for the Bible study that **Russell Carle** has been able to lead in Piha, New Zealand, a community with no organized Christian congregation.

21 Pray that God will use **Russell and Noelle Carle** to strengthen and expand his kingdom work in New Zealand.

22 Praise God for the growth of Advent Christian ministry in San Luis, Mexico, as church planter **Idelfonso Garcia** has already established three Bible studies and is working toward establishing a new congregation.

23 Pray for our Mexican national missionaries: **Mario and Elena Cortez, Joel and Omega Garcia, Alberto and Fabiola Gomez**, and **Idelfonso Garcia**.

24 Praise God for the committed group of students studying at **Tecate Bible Institute** and preparing to reach their Mexican countrymen for Christ.

25 Pray for Croatian national missionary **Desire Ahola** during his continued recovery from major injuries received in an auto accident last November.

26 Praise God that the congregation that **Desire Ahola** has established in the Croatian capital of Zagreb has continued to meet and serve during Pastor Ahola's convalesence.

27 Pray that God will raise up Advent Christian missionaries for work in **India** and **Honduras**.

28 Today, we mark the **death of Jesus Christ**. It is a time for serious reflection on that act and its meaning for our lives.

29 Pray that God will give direction and strength to Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** as he prepares for a busy several months of national and international travel.

30 Resurrection Sunday! Today is a day for joy and celebration. **Jesus Christ is alive!**

31 Pray that God will give wisdom and direction to our new assistant for urban and ethnic ministries, Rev. **John Roller**. John will serve one-quarter time in that capacity.

Editorial continued from page 3

in her tradition. At the same time, I think Protestants can learn from Catholics by observing their regard for the sacraments as well as their strong respect for those to whom God has given spiritual authority— whether bishops and priests, or pastors, elders, and disciplers.

Our mission is to reach the lost, to communicate grace to sinners, and to love the unlovable through Christ's love. In the words of Hans Kung, the Roman Catholic theologian, "The church must constantly be aware that its faith is weak, its knowledge dim, its profession of faith halting, that there is not a single sin or failing which it has not in one way or another been guilty of. And though it is true that the church must always disassociate itself from sin, it can never have any excuse for keeping any sinners at a distance."

In saying these things, I don't want to give the impression that we should accept all Roman Catholics as Christians without question. Obviously, there are still significant issues on which we have significant differences of opinion—issues such as the veneration of the saints and the immaculate conception and assumption of Mary. Rather, I want to emphasize that we need to be careful in judging that which we know little about, especially when it is a group that has been in existence more than a millennium longer than our own denomination. I believe that it is possible to be one in Christ while still maintaining a diversity of beliefs and traditions. I like how Richard John Neuhaus puts it: "Our purpose is not to create a unity among Christians that does not already exist. Indeed, we cannot create Christian unity at all. Unity is God's gift, not our creation." ❑

Tribute continued from page 17

the joy of thy Lord." You did it Dad and Mom! Your legacy will live on in the hearts of many and especially in the lives of your family.

Many times we wait until it is too late to tell those we love how we feel. I wanted you and those whom we know to see this while we still have you. We love you Mom and Dad, and hope you have many more days together. To God be the glory!

—Your son, Jim Butterfield

Advent Christians across Canada and the United States remember the ministry of Rev. & Mrs. Milford Butterfield. They served Advent Christian congregations in New York, Connecticut, North Carolina, Florida, and Georgia. Milford also served the Advent Christian Church as National Youth Director and helped organize regional youth ministry in the Appalachian Region. As evidenced by the testimony of their son, Jim, the Butterfields' ministry has touched many lives for the cause of Jesus Christ. Advent Christians everywhere appreciate their commitment to Christ and his cause.



Truths Are Not Always Self-Evident

Tony Campolo

RECENTLY, a study was made comparing American mothers with mothers in Japan. Among the many questions that were asked, the one that proved most intriguing was this one: "What do you want for your children when they grow up?" Just about every Japanese mother answered this question with the same word, "Successful!"

The answer was not surprising, because there is no society on the face of the earth that drives their children to be successful as do the people of Japan. I am not advising that we imitate them. Any acquaintance with the children of Japan will reveal them to be some of the most depressed children of the world. Their parents so constantly drive them to be successful that Japanese children, especially in their teenage years, often seem burdened and devoid of joy.

In contrast, when American mothers were asked what they wanted for their children when they grew up, the answer, not surprisingly was one word, "Happy!"

What concerned me as I read the study was that neither the typical Japanese mother nor the typical American mother gave the answer that you would have gotten from my mother. If you had asked her what she wanted me to be when I grew up, she would have answered, "Good!"

Isn't that an interesting word? My mother would have wanted me to be successful and she certainly would have wanted me to be happy. But transcending both success and happiness in her value system would have been goodness. Her prayer for me was that "goodness and mercy would follow me all the days of my life, and that I might dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

No wonder our society is in trouble. Our society is imbued with the theme articulated in the Declaration of Independence, and we have become a people preoccupied with "the pursuit of happiness. With happiness as our goal, we give up on our marriages at the first sign of unhappiness. We are a people who embrace any new form of entertainment, whether moral or immoral, as long as we think it will make us happy. And we are ready to hold down two jobs and neglect the really important relationships of our lives in order to earn the money to buy the things that somebody on a T.V. ad promised us would make us happy.

When I mentioned all of this to a friend, he quickly turned on me and said, "First you question the basic theme of the Declaration of Independence. I suppose the next thing you'll do is raise questions about the values set forth in the Constitution."

After some thought, I had to say, "Yes I do! I *do* question the values laid out in the Constitution. While I think it lays down the principles that make for the best political system ever devised by men and women, the Constitution has one basic flaw. It clearly delineates the Bill of Rights, but it nowhere states a Bill of Responsibilities."

I went on to make the case that a government that insures people of their rights, but fails to clearly spell out their responsibilities fails to call them to be the kind of people God wants them to be. Americans are quick to scream if their rights are violated in any way, but all too few of us sense the deep responsibilities we have to each other as fellow citizens. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are among the greatest documents ever devised by the human race, but they do not measure up to the divinely inspired Scriptures. The Bible calls us to the goodness that exalteth a nation, and to the mutual responsibilities that we have if we are to truly be a people of God. When all is said and done, we must yield to the Word of God, because next to it even the best words of people seem inadequate. ❑

Tony Campolo is professor of sociology and director of the urban studies program at Eastern Baptist College in St. Davids, Penn. He is also founder and president of the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education, an organization involved in educational, medical, and economic development programs in various third-world countries including Haiti and the Dominican Republic. His weekly television program Hashing it Out (with Steve Brown) is carried on the Faith and Values cable television network.

Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
Box 17 Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Marion Damon (March 27)
Box 17 Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Margaret Helms (September 18)
3612 Brief Rd. E.
Monroe, NC 28110

Jeff and Penny Vann
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
c/o Rick Johnson
229 S. Commonwealth
Aurora, IL 60506

Karen Rigney (June 5)
c/o Emmanuel A.C. Church
P.O. Box 1812
Rochester, NH 03866-1812

New Zealand

Russell and Noelle Carle
(December 30 and December 19)
(Ryan, November 15, 1979)
(Emily, June 23, 1983)
(Peter, August 14, 1991)
51 Brylee Dr.
Conifer Grove
Auckland 1702
NEW ZEALAND

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
Bududuram Refugee Camp
National Mobilization Program
Box 46
Accra, GHANA

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

China
Our pastor in China
All correspondence should be channelled through the missions office.

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devadason
Beulah Margaret Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Croatia

Desirée Ahola
c/o Advent Christian Croatia Ministry
Bozidar Magovca 44/7 Kat.
Trund 10000 Zagreb
Croatia – Europe

Mexico

Carlos Quintero
387 W. Poppyfields Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
(818) 791-2447

Mario and Elena Cortez
Joel and Omega Garcia
Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Carlos Quintero

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Vice-president
Pomeroy Carter; Planned Giving
Dwight Carpenter; Student Ministries
John Roller; Urban/Ethnic Ministries

P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

Harold Patterson; World Missions
Millie Griswold; Resource Development
Russell Giasson; Services
Robert Mayer; Publications
Richard Russell; Church Relations

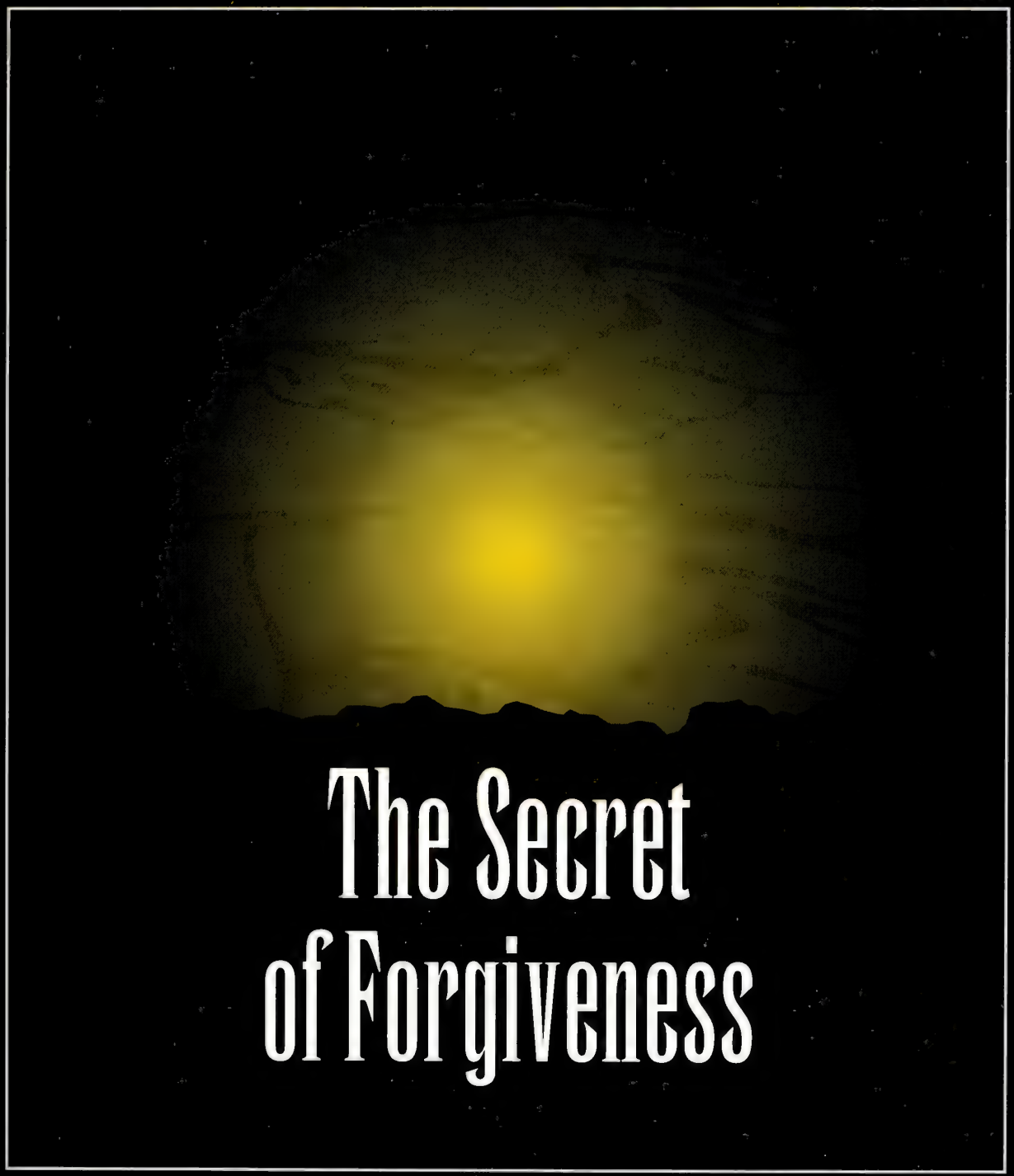
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Advent Christian

WITNESS

March 1997



The Secret of Forgiveness

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How do we learn to practice forgiveness when others hurt us? Max Lucado suggests that authentic forgiveness begins when we appreciate the grace of God.

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In the second of two articles on forgiveness, Mark Maulding looks at several practical ways we can practice forgiveness.

Death and the Resurrection of the Body 9

As Christians, what is our hope for eternal life? James Cook reminds us that it is not found in the immortality of the soul, but in the resurrection of the body at the return of Jesus Christ.

Learning from Paul and Barnabas 12

Paul and Barnabas experienced serious conflict in their relationship with each other. Mary Roller suggests that we can learn valuable lessons from the relational struggle they faced.

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photos by Jim Whitmer Photography

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Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks** Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria



Only One Way?

A FEW WEEKS ago, I found myself thinking about the time I first heard and understood the gospel and its meaning for my life. It was May 1965 at the Advent Christian campground in Santa Cruz, California. At a weekend youth rally there, I heard a college student affiliated with Campus Crusade for Christ talk about how God had expressed his love for young people like me through Jesus Christ.

I understood for the first time the reality that I was a sinner and that apart from Jesus Christ, I would ultimately suffer God's judgment and punishment. We often equate sin to questionable behavior or harmful actions, and there is a connection. But the essence of sin is a broken relationship with God that stems from my desire, and the desire of all humanity, to live life independently of God. That desire leads us to break God's commandments and violate his design for life.

We never receive God's grace on our terms, only on his.

If that student had stopped there, his presentation would have been cause for despair. But he told me and the others sitting in that tabernacle the best news that I've ever heard. Jesus Christ, by his death, paid the penalty for my sin and if I was willing to acknowledge my sin and confess Jesus Christ as my savior and Lord, I would ultimately receive God's gift of eternal life.

Amazing Grace

I confessed Jesus Christ as my savior and Lord that day. As I've reflected on the message of the gospel and how it has impacted my life, the words of John Newton's hymn frequently come to mind. "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound; that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found. Was blind, but now I see." A holy and just God chose to express his love for people like me through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The good news of God's amazing grace has two important implications, both of which stand in opposition to how many Americans view life. We like to measure a person's value and worth by what they do and how much they earn. The gospel reminds us that we cannot earn God's grace, no matter how hard we try. No matter how much I earn, no matter how many good things I try to accomplish, I cannot please God and save myself from God's just punishment.

Americans today also like choices. We walk into a supermarket and we're confronted with twenty flavors of ice-cream. We flip on the tube and cable TV allows us to choose between fifty channels. (And I still complain that there's nothing on worth watching.) We've extended that pluralism to our understanding of life and of the Christian faith. All ideas are equal and no one idea or viewpoint is better than another. In the same way, all religious viewpoints, whether Christian or not, are equally valid.

His terms, not ours

Pluralism is not necessarily bad, especially in terms of culture. The Bible reminds us that Christ's followers will come from "every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev 5:9). But throughout the New Testament, we're confronted with the reality that our salvation is a gift of God's grace based on our confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Those who refuse to confess Jesus Christ reject that grace and will face God's just punishment and judgment.

All ideas are not equally valid. Some are right and some are wrong. Some are good. Others are dangerous. All religions are not equally valid either. Why? Because we never receive God's grace on our terms, only on his. I'm grateful that throughout Christian history, there have been followers of Jesus who clearly saw that and boldly taught and lived their Christian faith. I'm thankful that thirty-two years ago this May, a college

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The Secret of Forgiveness

The God of Great Grace

Max Lucado
San Antonio, Texas

IT'S NOT easy watching Jesus wash these feet.

To see the hands of God massaging the toes of men is, well...it's not right. The disciples should be washing his feet. Nathanael should pour the water. Andrew should carry the towel. But they don't. No one does. Rather than serve, they argue over which one is the greatest (Luke 22:24).

What disappointment their words must have brought Jesus.

"I'm the number one apostle."

"No, I'm much more spiritual than you."

"You guys are crazy. I brought more people to hear Jesus than anyone."

As they argue, the basin sits in the corner, untouched. The towel lies on the floor, unused. The servant's clothing hangs on the wall, unworn. Each disciple sees these things. Each disciple knows their purpose. But no one moves, except Jesus. As they bicker, he stands. But he doesn't speak. He removes his robe and takes the servant's wrap off the wall. Taking the pitcher, he pours the water into the basin. He kneels before them with the basin and sponge and begins to wash. The towel that covers his waist is also the towel that dries their feet.

It's not right.

Isn't it enough that these hands will be pierced in the morning? Must they scrub grime tonight? And the disciples...do they deserve to have their feet washed? Their affections have waned; their loyalties have wavered.

We want to say...

Look at John, Jesus. This is the same John who told you to destroy a city. The same John who demanded that you censure a Christ-follower who wasn't in your group. Why are you washing his feet?

And James! Skip James. He wanted the seat of honor. He and his brother wanted special treatment. Don't give it to him. Give him the towel. Let him wash his own feet. Let him learn a lesson.

And while you are at it, Jesus, you might as well skip Philip. He told you there wasn't enough food to feed the large crowd. You tested him, and he flunked. You gave him the chance, and he blew it.

And Peter? Sure, these are the feet that walked on water, but they're also the feet that thrashed about in the deep. He didn't believe you. Sure he confessed you as the Christ, but he's also the one who told you that you didn't have to die. He doesn't deserve to have his feet washed.

None of them do. When you were about to be stoned in Nazareth, did they come to your defense? When the Pharisees took up rocks to kill you, did they volunteer to take your place? You know what they have done.

And what's more, you know what they are about to do!

You can already hear them snoring in the garden. They say they'll stay awake, but they won't. You'll sweat blood; they'll saw logs.

You can hear them sneaking away from the soldiers. They make promises tonight. They'll make tracks tomorrow.

Look around the table, Jesus. Out of the twelve, how many will stand with you in Pilate's court? How many will share with you the Roman whip? And when you fall under the weight of the cross, which disciple will be close enough to spring to your side and carry your burden?

None of them will. Not one. A stranger will be called because no disciple will be near.

Don't wash their feet, Jesus. Tell them to wash yours.

That's what we want to say. Why? Because of the injustice? Because we don't want to see our King behaving as a servant? God on his hands and knees, his hair hanging around his face? Do we object because we don't want to see God washing feet?

Or do we object because we don't want to do the same?

Stop and think for a minute. Don't we have some people like the disciples in our world?

Double-tongued promise-breakers. Fair-weather friends. What they said and what they did are two different things. Oh, maybe they didn't leave you alone at the cross, but maybe they left you alone with the bills...

or your question

or your illness.

Or maybe you were just left at the altar,

or in the cold,

holding the bag.

Vows forgotten. Contract abandoned.

Logic says: "Put up your fists."

Jesus says: "Fill up the basin."

Logic says: "Bloody his nose."

Jesus says: "Wash his feet."

Logic says: "She doesn't deserve it."

Jesus says: "You're right, but you don't, either."

I don't understand how God can be so kind to us, but he is. He kneels before us, takes our feet in his hands, and washes them. Please understand that in washing the disciples' feet, Jesus is washing ours. You and I are in this story. We are at the table. That's us being cleansed, not from our dirt, but from our sins.

And the cleansing is not just a gesture; it is a necessity. Listen to what Jesus said: "If I don't wash your feet, you are not one of my people" (John 13:8).

Jesus did not say, "If you don't wash your feet." Why not? Because

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The Gift that Keeps on Giving

Mark Maulding
Charlotte, N.C.

"FORGIVE AS the Lord forgave you," the apostle Paul told the Colossian believers. The apostle recognized the physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual damage that unforgiveness can cause in our Christian lives. Last issue, we looked at some common misunderstandings of what authentic forgiveness actually means. And we looked at what Jesus taught about forgiveness. Now we want to explore some practical ways we can practice forgiveness. But first, let's return to the consequences of unforgiveness.

What happens when we allow an unforgiving attitude to fester in our lives? How are we affected when we're not willing to offer forgiveness to someone who has wronged us? Emotionally, we become bitter, and if you carry bitterness for any length of time, you can easily wind up depressed. Many doctors will tell you that stress plays a major role in their patients' illnesses. Our bodies were not designed by God to carry the stress of damaged emotions for very long. This stress apparently impacts our body chemistry and we can become lethargic, unmotivated, and easily discouraged. Problems like ulcers, colitis, headaches, muscle tension, even fatigue can be caused by unforgiveness. When unforgiveness festers, those problems can last for years.

Relationally, those who have been hurt and have never forgiven those who hurt them, many times wind up hurting other people. Hurt people hurt people! And unforgiveness makes it more difficult to build good friendships with others. Often, people with an unforgiving attitude wonder why they cannot get close to others. But their bitterness often repels other people from them.

Spiritually, unforgiveness almost always involves unresolved anger, and that may open a door for Satan to exercise control. It's not necessarily sinful to feel angry. Paul writes in Ephesians, "In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and give the devil a foothold" (Ephesians 4:26-27). What the apostle wants us to see is that if we do not honestly acknowledge our anger appropriately and quickly, it becomes unforgiveness and it gives Satan an opportunity in our lives.

I do not believe that Christians

(The second of two articles

RGIVENESS

can be demon possessed, but I do believe that we can be subject to control by demons. But I have witnessed many Christians, people who were subject to demonic control, find freedom from that control by forgiving the people who had hurt them. Forgiveness helps us experience the freedom that Jesus Christ has provided for us.

Forgiving someone from the heart

Jesus concludes the parable from Matthew 18 by declaring that our forgiveness must come from our hearts—from the very core of our being. So how do we do that? How can we practice authentic forgiveness—the kind of forgiveness that comes from our hearts? Let me offer some practical ways:

1. Realize who you are in Christ. When you received Christ, your identity changed. Paul writes to the church at Rome, "For just as through the disobedience of the one man [Adam] the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man [Jesus Christ] the many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). With these words, the apostle communicates a vital truth: When you received Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, you went from having the identity of a sinner to now having the identity of being righteous. In other words, you went from being a child of Satan to being a child of God. In the core of your being, you are truly a new creation in Christ.

That means that through Jesus coming to indwell your life, you now have the nature and identity of a forgiver. The deepest you, therefore, wants to forgive. And your desire not to forgive comes from your flesh. The New Testament is full of references to who you are in Christ. Let me encourage you to study the phrase "in Christ" in the New Testament, especially in Paul's letters to the early churches. Read through them and underline each time the apostle uses the phrase "in Christ" or "in Christ Jesus." Then make a list of each benefit that the apostle connects with that phrase. Doing that will help you discover the richness of what Jesus Christ has done for you.

2. Tell the Lord that you are willing to face your anger. Most people either do not want to admit that they're angry or they struggle with actually admitting their anger to the Lord. Through our ministry, I've had opportunity to counsel with a number of people. And as I've helped people work through their need to forgive, almost everyone of them didn't realize just how angry they were until they actually forgave. Just think. If you forgive someone who has hurt you, even if you think you don't need to, the "worst" thing that could happen to you is that you might discover more of the real freedom for living that Jesus Christ offers.

3. Make a list of every person who has ever hurt or angered you in any way. Then, under each person's name, write down how they hurt or offended you. If you're going to forgive from your heart, what I ask you to do next is vitally important and often difficult to do. Think back to each event that you've listed. Then write down beside it how that event either made you feel at the time or how it makes you feel now. (Or both, if you desire to do so.) You'll probably need to ask God to show you these feelings.

One thing I've discovered is that often, the most difficult persons to place on your list are yourself and God. I know that "forgiving God" is not really biblical, so I'll tell you how to handle that in my next suggestion.

A quiet place; an empty chair

4. Forgive each person you've listed one by one. As we saw in Jesus parable about the king and the slaves, to forgive means to release someone from debt. Let me encourage you to find a quiet, secluded place with an empty chair. It's important that you not be distracted. Spend a few moments asking the Lord for his guidance and trust him to be your strength to forgive. Then, one by one, imagine each of the individuals you've listed sitting in the empty chair next to you. Tell that person how what he or she did hurt you and how it made you feel. Then, after you've gotten to the end of that person's list of offenses,

forgive them. Release them from the debt you thought they owed you. Tell them they no longer owe you anything.

You might say something like this: "John, though you don't deserve it, I forgive you for all of these things I just told you about. I release you. You don't owe me anything else anymore. You don't owe me love, acceptance, right treatment, or anything else. Jesus is personally responsible for meeting my needs, not you."

When you get to God, tell him how you feel about him and what you think he has done to hurt you. David did this in many of the psalms. Jeremiah did this at a key moment in his life. When you're done, confess your bitterness towards God as sin. Then tell God that you release him from responsibility and that you trust him to work his good and perfect will in all of those things.

5. Give God the right to allow that person to hurt you again. This completes the process of forgiving from your heart by placing your ultimate trust in God, and in his control of your life and circumstances. By doing this, you're now allowing God to be your defender. (In cases of physical or sexual abuse, you may have to turn the person in to the authorities, since these types of abuse are against the law. It would also be unloving towards yourself and towards that person for you to allow them to continue to abuse you or others.)

6. Now, take your list and "nail it to the cross of Christ." Once you have forgiven all the people on your list, tear it up or burn it. If you know of a large, outdoor cross in your neighborhood, go nail your list to it. Then you can take your list down and throw it away. This signifies to you that your forgiveness is complete.

7. If Satan ever brings past hurts back to your attention, recognize that he is trying to discourage you. Verbally remind him that you have forgiven that person and that by God's grace you are not going to dwell on those hurts again.

8. After you have forgiven, your feelings may take a few days, even a few weeks to catch up with the forgiveness you have offered. Be patient and allow God to work in your life to catch your emotions up with your actions. In time, they will catch up.

9. Realize that forgiveness is a lifestyle, not a one-time event. Once you forgive, you may later remember other events where someone, even someone on your original list, hurt you. You need to forgive them for those things too. As you continue living, you will also need to forgive others who hurt you.

I wish I could tell you that once you forgive, you will never get hurt again. But that's not realistic. As long as you and I live in a sinful, fallen world, we are going to get hurt. And we will need to continue to forgive the people who wound us.

How can we practice authentic forgiveness—the kind of forgiveness that comes from our hearts?

Practicing forgiveness

I remember a woman who forgave her list of offenders in my office one day. She was almost sixty years old at the time. She had been a pastor's wife and had served on a church staff at one time. She had been adopted as an infant and had experienced a prodigal son later in her life. As she came in to forgive, she told me that her heels were dragging. She was not looking forward to doing it.

Then she sat down in front of the empty chair and began to forgive. It took her almost an hour to forgive all of the people she had listed. Sometimes she cried, especially when she forgave her husband for dying prematurely in the middle of the night two years previously. At other times, she forgave almost methodically without showing any emotion.

When it was all over, she was exhausted. Later that night, as she raised up from brushing her teeth, her back cracked all the way up her spine. She had experienced back problems for years, and apparently, some of it was from the stress that her unforgiveness put on her body. Now that the stress was gone, her back muscles relaxed and she was partially healed from her back problem. Yes, some of it was organic and she still has some pain from that part of it today. But she is a walking testimony of God's grace working in a person who forgives.

Over the years, I've seen the countenance of many people change from being angry and stern to peaceful and calm. Why? Because they have released all of the people whom they had held in the prison of unforgiveness. How about you? Have you forgiven the people who have hurt and wounded you? Knowing that you need to forgive or knowing how to forgive will not do you any good if you do not actually practice forgiveness.

Authentic faith in Jesus Christ always leads to obedience. Set aside a few moments with Jesus Christ right now. Tell him that during the next two weeks you will sit down, write out your list of people, and forgive them. Your heðt will be lighter and the inward presence of the Lord Jesus will grow even sweeter. Why? Because forgiveness is a gift that keeps on giving—giving to those who have hurt you, giving to your friends and family, and giving to your own life. ❑

Mark Maulding, his wife Ellen, and their four children live in Fort Mill, S.C. Mark directs Grace Ministries Carolinas, a ministry that focuses on pastoral counseling and on helping Christians recapture the heart of the Christian faith—God's grace as expressed through Jesus Christ.

DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

James Cook
Holland, Michigan

THE DEATH in recent months of four people close to me has underlined once more the tragic, universal realities Emily Dickinson captured in thirty-four words:

> The bustle in a house
> The morning after death
> Is solemnest of industries
> Enacted upon earth,—
>
> The sweeping up the heart,
> And putting love away
> We shall not want to use again
> Until eternity.

The solemn bustle, the sweeping up the heart, the putting love away—all image consequences of death that experience makes all too clear. But the nature of their cause, death itself, is less clear, even in the Bible.

The biblical witness

The Old Testament narrator of the Fall, for example, portrays death as a part of our punishment for sin. After solemn words of judgment addressed to the serpent and to the woman, the Lord said to the man, "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:19). Thus did the potential of Genesis 2:17 ("but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die") become actual.

Nevertheless, in most other Old Testament references, the end of life is viewed as natural, if not desirable: "As for yourself, you shall go to your ancestors in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age" (Gen. 15:15). In some texts, death is the end of existence (2 Sam. 14:14, Job 7:21), while in others it is a vastly weakened existence, deprived of the vital bond of community (Job 14:21f.). Whether it was the Israelites' strong emphasis on the corporate life of family and nation that made them content to live on in the life of their children, or whether it was the stubborn battle waged between Israel's theology and the cults of the dead and ancestor worship of her neighbors, the Old Testament is remarkably reticent about the dead.

At most, its books offer only occasional gleams of continuing communion with God beyond death (Job 19:26; Ps. 16:10; Ps. 73:21-28).

Neither does the New Testament provide the kind of simple, clear teaching about death for which we often long. The Jesus who comforted the dying thief (Luke 23:43) was also deeply troubled and moved to tears by the death of Lazarus his friend (Jn. 11:33-35). The same Paul who cast death in a friendly guise (Phil. 1:21-23) also labeled it "the last enemy to be destroyed" (1 Cor. 15:26).

The good news is that although the Bible does not tell us everything we would like to know about death and resurrection, it does provide all the assurance we need whenever we or those we know and love face death.

The Bible assures us that to be in right relationship with God is to be fully alive and supremely blessed. Genesis 3 shows us how a humanity created in that right relationship lost both it and its accompanying life. Redemptive history begins, says the Bible's first book, with God's gracious decision to restore that relationship through an everlasting covenant, "to be God to you and to your offspring after you" (Gen. 17:7). Redemptive history will have reached its consummation, says the Bible's last book, when "the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them" (Rev. 21:3). Little wonder then that the Seer follows that happy prospect with mention of "the spring of the water of life" and the "Lamb's Book of Life!"

This biblical linking of the covenant relationship God established in Genesis with life provides the key to understanding Jesus' profound but puzzling discussion with Sadducees, "who say there is no resurrection" (Mark 12:18-27). I was long puzzled how Jesus' reference in that discussion to Exodus 3:6 ("I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob") settled the issue of life beyond death. Now I think I understand. Exodus 3:6 contains the names of God's original covenant partners. To be in covenant relationship with the One who is both the living God and the God of the living, says Jesus, is to be in a relationship that not even death can break!

The Bible does not tell us everything we would like to know about death and resurrection...

The gospel reports that Jesus himself died with that assurance. In perfect trust, he placed himself in his Father's hands. Clearly he was content to leave the rest to God. Ought we to ask for anything more than to die as Jesus died? I think not, and yet much more is ours. Beyond the example of Jesus' trustful death we have the New Testament witness to the resurrection. Easter is not an affirmation of the immortality of the soul. It is a celebration of the resurrection of the body, and the proclamation that "in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died" (1 Cor. 15:20).

Body and soul

On each Lord's Day, Christians around the world confess precisely that, using creedal words born of Scripture: "I believe...in the resurrection of the body." Yet on Monday, distant from the unifying liturgy of yesterday's worship, in the uninhibited environment of private conversations around the coffee pot, what too frequently emerges is not belief in the resurrection of the body but rather in some form of the immortality of the soul. What happens in those hours between Sunday and Monday? Why struggle with what the Bible teaches about the resurrection of the body? Two answers lie at hand. One is the common confusion of restoration with resurrection. Too often, Christians speak of the resurrection of Lazarus (or Jairus's daughter or the widow's son at Nain) although these were, in fact, restorations. The world has witnessed only one resurrection and its subject was Jesus. Lazarus and the others were simply returned to our kind of life. For them, death was not destroyed, but only miraculously delayed or postponed. They experienced no essential change. Their bodies remained at the mercy of eventual dissolution and decay. Either soon or late, the day would come when through accident, disease, or age, each faced death again.

Precisely the opposite was true of Jesus. His resurrection inaugurated the life of the age to come, complete with a "spiritual body" from which decay and death were banished forever. Death had now been swallowed up in victory, for Jesus' resurrection was not a return but an advance, not a coming back but a movement forward into God's future and ours.

But the major reason for our struggle is the pervasive popularity of the ancient idea that we by nature possess immortal souls. The immortality of the soul, however, owes more to Greek philosophy than to biblical revelation, more to Socrates than to Jesus. We can best recognize the truth of that statement through an encounter with a few lines from Plato's *Phaedo*, the classic source of this teaching. Having established to his satisfaction that the "soul is immortal," Socrates added that if "the immortal is also imperishable, it's impossible for the soul, whenever

death attacks it, to perish."

Had Jesus believed that, he would never have said, "Do not fear those [persecutors] who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him [God] who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). To claim that there is a part of us that is immortal by nature, a part that not even God can condemn to death, is theologically dangerous. In that claim is the frightening echo of the original temptation "to be like God" who alone has immortality (1 Tim. 6:16).

To attempt to secure life after death by denying the power of death can only diminish the creative miracle of both Jesus' resurrection and ours. The gospel proclaims Jesus came to destroy the death which holds us prisoner, and it promises that we can be born to a living hope, not by anything immortal in ourselves, but by God's great mercy mediated through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3).

Equally unbiblical is Socrates's radical disparagement of the body. In life, he says, the soul is "entirely fastened and welded to the body and is compelled to regard realities through the body as through prison bars." At death (now viewed as a welcome good), the soul is "released from the body, as from fetters." No accounts can accept this description of the body. At the same time, that description easily explains why the philosophers in the marketplace of Athens scoffed at Paul's proclamation of the resurrection of the dead (Acts 17:32). From Socrates, the Athenians had learned that the resurrection of the body would be a tragic step backward; from Genesis and Jesus, Paul had learned that the resurrection of the body is the crowning event of God's redemption of the whole person.

...but it does provide all the assurance we need when we or those we love face death.

In Christ by grace

We will accept the truth of the above statement about the immortality of the soul when we realize that this teaching is not the biblical hope for surviving death. Socrates taught that we survive death because there is an immortal soul in us by nature. The New Testament teaches that we survive death only because we are in Christ by grace. And without question, the New Testament writer who says that most clearly and fully is the apostle Paul.

To his friends at Corinth and to Christians everywhere he confessed, "we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence" (2 Cor. 4:14). Nothing is said here about the period between our death and resurrection, and for many Christians that is not only acceptable but also in harmony with the fundamental unitary view of humankind that Paul inherited from the Old Testament. As "a Hebrew born of Hebrews," Paul would have shared the view that humans are not embodied souls but animated bodies. That would mean the dead are dead but that in Christ they will be brought back to life by the creative power of God on resurrection day.

For many other Christians, including Paul, something more can be said. The apostle sees the resurrection principle to be already at work in the people of Christ by the power of the Spirit who indwells them (2 Cor. 5:5). We do not lose heart, he says, for "even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16). In other words, just as the flesh (the power of sin and death) seizes the whole person (our outer and inner nature) together, so the spirit (the power of creation) seizes the whole person (our outer and inner nature) together. Although the full and final possession of our outer nature awaits the resurrection, the spiritual body of the coming age is in some sense already in process of formation. The daily renewal of our inner nature offers the hope that physical death will not mean extinction, or even disembodiment, but the immediate enjoyment of being "at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8).

Our hope and assurance

This Christian hope differs from the immortality of the soul at three crucial points: First, the condition of the dead in Christ is still imperfect, awaiting "the redemption of our bodies" (Rom. 8:23); second, death in the New Testament remains an enemy; and third, survival of death results not from some inherent essence of the soul but rather from divine intervention. "The life everlasting" we confess in the creed is due, not to our nature, but to God's grace through the working of God's Spirit (Rm. 8:11).

Perhaps even this understanding will not produce complete trust in what the Bible says about the resurrection of the body. That full measure of trust will only become a reality when we have learned to listen so seriously to both Bible and creed that we refuse to be more "spiritual" than God. In other words, we must hold salvation together with creation; there can be no resurrection gospel apart from Genesis.

This is why in the eighth chapter of Romans, when Paul's mind was obviously on the full blessing

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Learning from Paul and Barnabas

Mary Roller
Charleston, W.Va.

THERE'S A STORY in Acts that I used to think was rather sad. It starts in Acts 15:36-38: "Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.' Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company..."

Two Christian brothers, dedicated to spreading the gospel, and here they are arguing! They have been through so much together and yet their disagreement becomes so intense that they decide to go their separate ways. Aren't Christians supposed to be united in Christ? Doesn't Paul himself exhort us to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace?" (Ephesians 4:3). And yet these two heroes of the faith fail to work out their differences.

But, this isn't a completely dismal picture. Notice that neither one abandoned the Lord or his work. More ministry ended up being accomplished, rather than less, as both Paul and Barnabas found other companions and went on serving Christ. Also, while the Bible doesn't say so specifically, there are indications that they did reconcile at a later date. Was Barnabas one of the brothers mentioned in Acts 21:17 who welcomed Paul and his companions "warmly" when they came to Jerusalem? We aren't told but we do know that Paul later tells Timothy to "Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry" 2 Timothy 4:11).

Both Paul and Barnabas were concerned about the church and wanted to see it grow strong. But they had different ideas of the best way to go about it. Paul wanted to bring a reliable helper along. He knew there would be difficult times and the work was so important that he did not want to jeopardize it. Barnabas was also concerned about the work, but he was a people person. He sensed that Mark had great potential and wanted to encourage and restore this young disciple. He believed in Mark even as he had believed in the newly-converted Paul some years before. Why didn't Paul trust Barnabas' judgment? Or, why didn't Barnabas follow Paul's lead? We simply don't know because we aren't told. What we do see in this account is that Paul and Barnabas were human beings just like us!

Handling disagreements

In our churches, and in our denomination at all levels, we sometimes find ourselves embroiled in disagreements even though we find them upsetting and distasteful. So what do we do?

First, it is helpful to believe that "the other side" has a good motive. Recognize that those involved in the

In our churches, and in our denomination at all levels, we sometimes find ourselves embroiled in disagreements even though we find them upsetting and distasteful. So what do we do?

disagreement truly believe that their view is the right one, or is the best solution to the problem being faced. This goes along with 1 Corinthians 13:7 where we are told that love "believeth all things." Yes, there are times when motives are less than pure, times when right and wrong are clear issues. As Paul says, "No doubt there will be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval" (1 Corinthians 11:19).

But often the issues involved in disagreements within our church fellowships are not clear-cut moral or spiritual issues. The question is not what we want to accomplish but rather how to go about it. In such cases, it is especially helpful for all parties to believe that others are also motivated by a concern for the gospel of Christ. After all, that attitude is most likely to lead to resolving the problem quickly and, even when accord is not realized, it leaves the door open to future reconciliation.

Second, we must firmly resolve to continue to serve the Lord no matter what! Disagreements in church

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Dawn Rutan
Wheaton, Ill.

IN RELATION to a Christian Traditions class I took last fall, I decided to do a little research into my own denominational heritage. As I was reading Clyde Hewitt's *Midnight and Morning*, I was struck by two things.

First, I noticed that William Miller proclaimed that the Second Advent of Christ would occur "on or about 1843." Thousands of people followed his leadership in proclaiming the urgent message and preparing themselves to meet their Savior. One-hundred-fifty years later, we still await the "blessed hope," but the cry has lost its urgency. How would our lives be different if we believed that Jesus would return within the next year? Many have heard the comment to "live each day as if it was your last," but does anyone do that? I believe several things would be different if we truly anticipated the imminent return of the Bridegroom:

1) **Outreach:** The sharing of the Good News to those who are lost would become a priority. "You will be filled with power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be witnesses for me...unto the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

2) **Discipleship:** We would recognize our commission to build and equip believers to reach others for Christ. "Go therefore and make disciples...and behold I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20).

3) **Multiplication:** The body of Christ would grow as disciples make disciples. "And the Lord added daily to the number being saved" (Acts 2:47).

4) **Worship:** We would celebrate who we are in Christ and the anticipation of his imminent return. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight" (Eph. 1:3-4).

In all honesty, I'm dismayed by the lack of urgency and the apathy I see in many churches today. There is little call for outreach or disciplemaking, because there is no reality attached to the concept of the Second Coming. There is little worship because people don't know who they are in Christ and the glories of his coming kingdom (Eph. 1:8). And there is little multiplication because the churches are full of people who do not have a heart for the lost.

And yet the return of Jesus Christ is closer than ever. It has been said that if every believer discipled one person for a year, and after a year the two of them each discipled another person, and so on, the whole world could be won to Christ in less than eight years. What is stopping us from doing that, besides the lack of understanding of the imminent return of our Lord?

I said there were two things that struck me in my reading. The second is this: the followers of Miller were not afraid to take a stand

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Questions and Answers

with Edward Fudge

A deacon and Sunday school teacher ask, "I am puzzled by the warning, found in the Bible's last chapter, that "if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and from the holy city" (Rev. 22:19). If "his part" is "taken away," he must have had a "part" to begin with. But that sounds like one can lose his salvation. How do you square this with the doctrine of the security of the believer?"

I would first observe that the passage you quote uses language commonly found in apocalyptic literature, as does the book of Revelation throughout. This special vocabulary utilizes many symbols, including the Tree of Life and the New Jerusalem. To ignore this fact is to open the door to unbridled imagination in interpreting the book, resulting in explanations which would dumbfound Revelation's original readers and author alike.



But we must take Revelation seriously, even though we should not take it literally. It speaks with power to those who have ears to hear. And this warning at its close reminds us that it is both fearful and foolish to tamper with God's Word or to approach it irreverently.

The believer's assurance of salvation rests on the solid promises of Jesus himself—that none of those whom the Father has given him will perish, that he will lose none of them, but that he will raise them in the last day and give them eternal life and glory with him forever (John 6:37-40; 10:27-29).

In the New Testament, however, the doctrine of assurance is not an independent or theoretical doctrine to be viewed for its own sake. It always appears in good company, in a context which stresses either the all-sufficiency of Christ's saving work and / or the faithfulness of God to those who trust his promises.

Unlike many modern preachers and authors, no biblical writer ever presents eternal security in the abstract, as if to say, "Here is a *doctrine*—if you ever accept Christ you can never be lost." Our security does not reside in a doctrine of "security," but in an all-sufficient Savior and a faithful, promise-keeping God.

Finally, the wise person acknowledges that the Bible is not a one-dimensional book of flat and structured doctrines. Even the New Testament has at least eight human authors who wrote during most of a century. And, while the New Testament never contradicts itself, it does contain mystery and paradox, ambiguities and nuances. We should hear it with both ears—sometimes it speaks to one part of our head or heart, and sometimes to another. Those who desire a postcard theology written only in black-and-white will usually twist, bend, cut, or stretch some biblical passages to fit the doctrine they wish to express.

Let us be duly warned, for God is not mocked. And let us draw near with true hearts in full assurance of faith—for he who promised is always faithful.

Evelyn Wood, of the Advent Christian Village, writes, "How do you reconcile John 6:37 with Matthew 7:21? The one verse seems to say 'once saved, always saved.' The other seems to say, 'not necessarily so.'"

In John 6:37, Jesus promises, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." Elsewhere in the same discourse, our Lord assures us that those whom the Father has given to him "hear and learn" from God himself (v. 45), come to Jesus (v. 45), have eternal life (vv. 39-40), and will be raised on the last day (v. 44). These true believers (v. 47) enjoy intimate fellowship with Jesus and with the Father who sent him—abiding in Jesus, sharing his life, "eating" and "drinking" as it were his very "flesh" and "blood" (vv. 53-57).

In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus speaks of an entirely different group. These people are all talk and no substance (v. 21). They look good on the outside but are empty on the inside (vv. 22-23). They claim friendship with Jesus, whom they have never really known (v. 23). They might fool the watching world with their dazzling religiosity and even their miracle shows, but they do not deceive God. In his eyes, they are "workers of iniquity." Jesus borrows this phrase from Psalm 6:8 where, as throughout the psalms, it

describes religious hypocrites who pretend to serve God but whose hearts are far from him.

The Bible teaches the security of the believer, but it does not teach the security of the make-believer. That is the difference between John 6:37 and Matthew 7:21-23. Let us be sure that we know Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior and that we are not simply repeating correct religious words and actions.

"Today a Vietnamese Buddhist resident came by," reports a Christian sister working in Houston's enormous medical center, "and she said she was offended by a political candidate's reference to the United States as 'Judeo-Christian.' 'What am I,' the Vietnamese lady retorted, 'chopped liver?'"

Your Buddhist friend can take a deep breath and relax. The politician is simply expressing a fact of history. Whether we like it or not, the United States was founded by white, western Europeans who either professed Christian faith or whose culture was rooted in such faith, and they consciously established this nation on the Judeo-Christian belief in one God, on the Christian belief in Jesus Christ as Savior, and on the biblical moral principles and insights cherished by Jews and Christians alike.

The forefathers of this country expressed these convictions in the nation's charter documents and, frequently, in their own speech and private writing as well. This historical reality has been noted more than once by the United States Supreme Court, even in cases which uphold the hypothetical "wall of separation between Church and State."

Demographically, the United States as a whole is still populated by professing Christians, although, unfortunately, many of them do not connect that profession to daily life, and none of us lives up to our best ideals.

Certainly, one is not a Christian just because he or she happens to be born in the United States. My own city of Houston has, besides Christian churches, Jewish synagogues and Muslim mosques, Buddhist temples and Hindu shrines. This, in addition to the gathering places of those who worship the less tangible but equally idolatrous gods of power, wealth, physical beauty, entertainment, and pleasure.

Nor does our nation's history reflect a stainless "Christian" character, for it includes ruthless slaughters (from Native Americans to the unborn), the abomination of human slavery, domestic politics grounded in cold-hearted selfishness on the one hand or immoral irresponsibility on the other, and, far too often, foreign policies which support dictators who persecute Christians and who deny their own people basic human rights.

Your Buddhist friend challenges all of us individually to manifest the true spirit and life of Jesus Christ, so that perhaps God will use us as he draws others who have not yet believed in the Lord Jesus Christ who takes away the sin of the world. ❑

Barnabas from page 13

families or organizations are never an excuse to drop out of church or God's work. Like Paul and Barnabas, we must find an area of service and keep on working for the Lord.

Third, when rifts do occur, we must actively seek reconciliation. Keeping doors open is a start, but we must also take an active role in peacemaking. Personally we are told, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18). Paul sent a two-fold message in Philippians 4:2: "I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel..." On a personal level, Paul pleads with these two women to be reconciled in the Lord but he also gives instructions for others to help them in that process. Unfortunately, peacemaking holds some risks—it puts you in the middle and you sometimes end up taking grief from both sides. But the risk is worth taking after praying and asking God for wisdom and tact!

One other point worth making: Don't escalate the fight! When Paul and Barnabas had their disagreement, they didn't involve the entire church body with everyone taking sides. Whenever possible, we need to try to resolve two-person problems between those two persons!

Do I think this story in Acts is sad? Not really. It shows us that problems and disagreements always have been, and always will be, a part of church life. By God's grace, we must learn to resolve them, keep the doors of fellowship open, walk in God's grace, minister God's peace whenever possible, and most of all, never give up. ❑

Mary Roller lives in Charleston, W.Va., where she and her husband, John, serve First Advent Christian Church as the pastoral family.

My Life a Garden

Melodie Dean

AT BIRTH each of us arrives like a newly-tilled garden ready for planting. Before we can even talk, weeds of selfishness, stubbornness, anger, disobedience, mischief, and others have germinated and sprung up. By the time of preschool age through grade three, many of these and other weeds fully mature, bear fruit, reseed our garden and blow into the garden of others. Where did the weed seeds come from? We all were born "pre-seeded" with a sinful nature, our inheritance from the Fall. These seeds sprout and grow and are cultivated or pulled depending much on the environment, circumstances, and the influence of the Gospel. Parents can pull weeds, plant good seed, or help plant more bad seed. Other seed, good or bad, comes from school, television, friends, neighbors, relatives, Sunday school, church, etc.

We who are Christians have received, by the grace of God, the good seed of the Word. It was sown here and there by Sunday school teachers, pastors, vacation Bible school, Bible camp, Christian friends, books, tracts, etc. Some of these workers spent hours in teaching, counseling, and praying for us. By the grace of God, the seed was sown, sprouted, rained on, shined on, and workers were provided to pull weeds, fertilize (even when we didn't want it), hoe, and prune (reproof, rebuke, chastise in love), until finally, there came a point in time when what grew or didn't grow in our garden became our responsibility. We all make our own choices. As in real life, with little or no cultivation, the garden is taken over by weeds, with lots of weed seeds to share.

When we receive Christ as our Savior, our life is like a newly-tilled garden, all clean, with not a weed in sight. Almost immediately "weed seed" comes in. No one need plant thistles and weeds, they blow in of their own accord. The root of the old nature will try to raise its head, and Satan will see that plenty of bad seed will come our way to try to reclaim his old field. The good seed of the Word needs planting and cultivating in order to grow and bear fruit. Reading and hearing the Word is good seed planted. Sunday school, church, camp, vacation Bible school, radio, etc., is like sunshine and rain. Prayer is the hoeing—preparing the soil for the rain and fertilizing—receiving extra strength and power. Weeding can be tricky. We need to separate ourselves from that which would hinder our growth (and that can be different for each person—we each know our weaknesses). As we grow, our fruit will show—both the fruit of the Spirit demonstrated in our lives, and the fruit after our kind, others who have come to know Christ because of the seed of the Word that we helped plant, water, and cultivate in their lives. In this kind of gardening, there is no "retirement." The seed of God's Word never dies but it rises again to new life. ❑

Secret continued from page 5

we cannot. We cannot cleanse our own filth. We cannot remove our own sin. Our feet must be in his hands.

Don't miss the meaning here. To place our feet in the basin of Jesus is to place the filthiest parts of our lives into his hands. In the ancient East, people's feet were caked with mud and dirt. The servant of the feast saw to it that the feet were cleaned. Jesus is assuming the role of the servant. He will wash the grimiest part of your life.

If you let him. The water of the Servant comes only when we confess that we are dirty. Only when we confess that we are caked with filth, that we have walked forbidden trails and followed the wrong paths.

We tend to be proud like Peter and resist. "I'm not that dirty, Jesus. Just sprinkle a few drops on me and I'll be fine."

What a lie! "If we say we have no sin, we are fooling ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

We will never be cleansed until we confess we are dirty. We will never be pure until we admit we are filthy. And we will never be able to wash the feet of those who have hurt us until we allow Jesus, the one we have hurt, to wash ours.

You see, that is the secret of forgiveness. You will never forgive anyone more than God has already forgiven you. Only by letting him wash your feet can you have strength to wash those of another.

Still hard to imagine? Is it still hard to consider the thought of forgiving the one who hurt you?

If so, go one more time to the room. Watch Jesus as he goes from disciple to disciple. Can you see him? Can you hear the water splash? Can you hear him shuffle on the floor to the next person? Good. Keep that image.

John 13:12 says, "When he had finished washing their feet..."

Please note, he *finished* washing their feet. That means he left no one out. Why is that important? Because that also means he washed the feet of Judas. Jesus washed the feet of his betrayer. He gave his traitor equal attention. In just a few hours Judas's feet would guide the Roman guard to Jesus. But at this moment they are caressed by Christ.

That's not to say it was easy for Jesus.

That's not to say it is easy for you.

That is to say that God will never call you to do what he hasn't already done. ❑

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Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K
A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

April

1 Praise God for **Desiré Ahola**'s recovery from a major auto accident last November.

2 Pray that the Lord will continue to strengthen **Desiré** as he provides leadership for the Advent Christian congregation in Zagreb, Croatia.

3 Praise God for continuing growth in the four Advent Christian congregations being planted in the **Baja California** region of Mexico.

4 Pray that God will give guidance and provision to students studying at **Tecate Bible Institute** in Mexico.

5 Praise God for the oversight provided by Mexico Field Superintendent **Carlos Quintero** for Advent Christian ministry in that country.

6 Pray that God will give wisdom and strength to Advent Christian church planters in Mexico: **Joel and Omega Garcia**; **Mario and Elena Cortez**; **Idelfonso and Ana Maria Garcia**; and **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez**.

7 Praise God for the partnership that Advent Christian missions has been able to forge with **Mexican Medical Mission** for cooperative ministry.

8 Pray that God will use our brothers and sisters at **Mexican Medical Mission** as the endeavor to meet the physical and spiritual needs of people in many Mexican communities.

9 Praise God for **Floyd and Musa Powers**' willingness to serve a six-month short-term assignment in Japan while missionaries Steven and Ann Lay are home on furlough.

10 Pray that God's wisdom and grace will be especially close to **Steven and Ann Lay**, and their daughter **BethAnn**.

11 Praise God for the appointment of **John Roller** to serve as assistant for urban and ethnic ministries with Advent Christian World Missions.

12 Pray that God will give Pastor Roller **wisdom and guidance** as he continues serving First Advent Chris-

tian Church in Charleston, W. Va., and as he begins his one-quarter time service as urban/ethnic assistant.

13 Praise God for the stable and strong leadership that **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** continue to provide for Advent Christian ministry in the inner city of Memphis, Tennessee.

14 Pray that **Francis and Lyne** will continue to know God's leading and direction in their service especially as they plan various summer ministries for the congregation.

15 Praise God for the ministry opportunities that God is providing for Advent Christian **urban and ethnic congregations** in several key American cities.

16 Pray that God will give direction and strength to **Pastor Johnson and Selva Raju** as they continue establishing an Advent Christian congregation among Asian Indians in Montgomery County, Maryland.

17 Praise God that lives are being touched for Jesus Christ **around the world** not only through Advent Christian Missions but through the efforts of many missions agencies.

18 Pray that God will raise up Advent Christian missionary candidates for ministry in **Honduras** and **India**.

19 Praise God today for the ministry and Christian example of **your pastor**.

20 Pray that God will give **your pastor** an extra measure of his wisdom and strength today.

21 Praise God for **Russell and Noelle Carle** and the vision that God has given them to see Advent Christian ministry expand in New Zealand.

22 Pray that the Holy Spirit will move among people in the New Zealand coastal community of **Piha**, a town currently without an organized Christian church of any kind.

23 Praise God that Advent Christian ministry in the West African nations of **Nigeria** and **Ghana** has continued to grow.

24 Pray that the Lord will bring comfort to his people in the war-torn West African nation of **Liberia**.

25 Praise God that many Advent Christian **Sunday school classes** used the Walking as Jesus Walked curriculum during the past winter quarter.

26 Pray for Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** as he prepares for overseas trips later this year.

27 Praise God for 100 years of ministry and service on the part of the **Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society** being celebrated throughout this year.

28 Pray for **Marion Damon** and **Barbara White** as they oversee Advent Christian work in India.

29 Praise God that he has shown his **grace and mercy** to us through the person of Jesus Christ.

30 Pray that God will work through the ministries of **Jeff and Penny Vann**, and **David Vignali** as they serve him today in the Philippines.

Resurrection continued from page 11

of salvation ("the glory about to be revealed to us"), he began immediately to talk about creation. Clearly the two belong together; just as the creation was involved in the fall ("cursed is the ground because of you") so the creation is involved in salvation ("the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God").

This Pauline doctrine of cosmic redemption, whose immense scope staggers the imagination, becomes personal and pastoral precisely at the point of the resurrection of our bodies. When the apostle says that "we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies," he is simply underlining the creation account of Genesis 2, which teaches that we are in essence animated bodies. Because Paul had learned from Genesis that there had never been a bodiless human existence, he understood the resurrection of the body to be an essential part of God's work of salvation. Therefore, whenever we unite in the Apostles' Creed, our confession of belief in the resurrection of the body is guaranteed biblically by our initial confession, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth."

With that assurance I am content to leave the timetable and the details to God. Whether the new creation begins before death, takes place at death, or at the last day, it is enough for me to bury and be buried under the confessional banner on the tombstone of William the Silent in Delft: *expectat resurrectionem*—"He awaits the resurrection." ❑

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Stopping continued from page 13

in a hostile world. They may have been disappointed in the setting of a specific date, but still many of them held on to the belief that Christ was coming again soon. Do we dare to take a stand in secular America? Or are we not willing to join Christ in his sufferings? By his grace, we can make a difference in the world as we await "the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). ❑

Dawn Rutan is a graduate student at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois.

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

When we worship the holiness of our own convictions instead of our holy Lord, there is an element in human nature that makes us all possible popes and intolerant upholders of our personal views.

—Oswald Chambers

The church is the place where the "joy of each grows in proportion to the joy of all."

—Thomas Aquinas

Real hope begins where illusions end, and real life when death is tasted.

—Douglas John Hall

The apostles stressed that it is through His name alone that salvation comes, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Christ, in what is known as the Great Commission, implies that people have to hear the gospel before they will be saved. We simply have no clear example of salvation apart from a knowledge of Christ.

—Erwin Lutzer

I would like to suggest today to the Republican Party that it could begin its own reconstruction by today eliminating the pollsters and pundits and gurus and focus groups experts, who are paid to tell the party, what it is it ought to think and believe. If they're looking for some reason for the cynicism that infects the American public, they need look no further than the spinmasters of Washington D.C. The Republican Party is the party of Lincoln. Do you ever think he might have sat down with a focus group to find out what they thought of slavery?

—Gary Bauer

Spirituality without commitment is analogous to sexuality without commitment—quick and impersonal, superficial and impersonal, selfish and loveless, eventually a parody of its initial promise. Deprived of commitment, sexuality degenerates into addiction, violence, or boredom. Deprived of commitment, spirituality, no matter how wise or promising has a short shelf life.

—Eugene Peterson

There have been men... who got so interested in proving the existence of God that they came to care nothing for God himself...as if the good Lord had nothing to do but *exist*. There have been some who were so occupied in spreading Christianity that they never gave a thought to Christ. Man! You see it in smaller matters. Did ye ever know a lover of books that with all his first editions and signed copies had lost the power to read them? Or an organizer of charities that had lost all love for the poor? It is the subtlest of all snares.

—C.S. Lewis

A Christian must be a sign of contradiction in the world.... A Christian is one who all his life chooses between good and evil, lies and truth, love and hatred, God and Satan.... Today, more than ever, there is a need for our light to shine, so that through us, through our deeds, through our choices, people can see our Father who is in heaven.

—Jerzy Popieluszko

Sources: Oswald Chambers in *Devotions for a Deeper Life* (Zondervan, 1986). Gary Bauer in a November 20, 1996, address to the Heritage Foundation. Erwin Lutzer from *Christ Among Other Gods* (Moody Press, 1994). Douglas John Hall from *Thinking the Faith* (Fortress Press, 1991). Eugene Peterson from *Spirit Quest* (*Christianity Today*, 11/8/93).

Editorial

continued from page 3

student saw that as well and proclaimed God's grace in a way that made sense to this junior-high aged young person. I hope that our generation of evangelicals and Advent Christians will be faithful to the gospel and not yield to a fashionable but intellectually lazy brand of pluralism that sees all religions, ideologies, and philosophies as equally true.

Our challenge in a world that equates truth with intolerance is to boldly and lovingly proclaim the Christian message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. To do that, we dare not succumb to any notion that salvation and eternal life can be found through one of many paths. Jesus used an analogy of a shepherd to illustrate his uniqueness. "I tell you the truth," Jesus said, "I am the gate for the sheep... whoever enters through me will be saved" (John 10:7-10). May we always be faithful in proclaiming Jesus Christ as the only path to eternal life and knowledge of God.

Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
Box 17 Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Marion Damon (March 27)
Box 17 Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Margaret Helms (September 18)
3612 Brief Rd. E.
Monroe, NC 28110

Jeff and Penny Vann
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
2114 Prairie Rd.
Aurora, IL 60506

Karen Rigney (June 5)
c/o Emmanuel A.C. Church
P.O. Box 1812
Rochester, NH 03866-1812

New Zealand

Russell and Noelle Carle
(December 30 and December 19)
(Ryan, November 15, 1979)
(Emily, June 23, 1983)
(Peter, August 14, 1991)
11 Rosehill Dr.
Papakura
Auckland 1702
NEW ZEALAND

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
c/o P.O. Box 9459 Airport
Accra, GHANA

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

China
Our pastor in China
All correspondence should be channelled through the missions office.

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devadason
Beulah Margaret Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Croatia

Desirée Ahola
c/o Advent Christian Croatia Ministry
Bozidar Magovca 44/7 Kat.
Trund 10000 Zagreb
Croatia – Europe

Mexico

Carlos Quintero
387 W. Poppyfields Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
(818) 791-2447

Mario and Elena Cortez
Joel and Omega Garcia
Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Carlos Quintero

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Vice-president
Pomeroy Carter; Planned Giving
Dwight Carpenter; Student Ministries
John Roller; Urban/Ethnic Ministries

P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

Harold Patterson; World Missions
Millie Griswold; Resource Development
Russell Giasson; Services
Robert Mayer; Publications
Richard Russell; Church Relations

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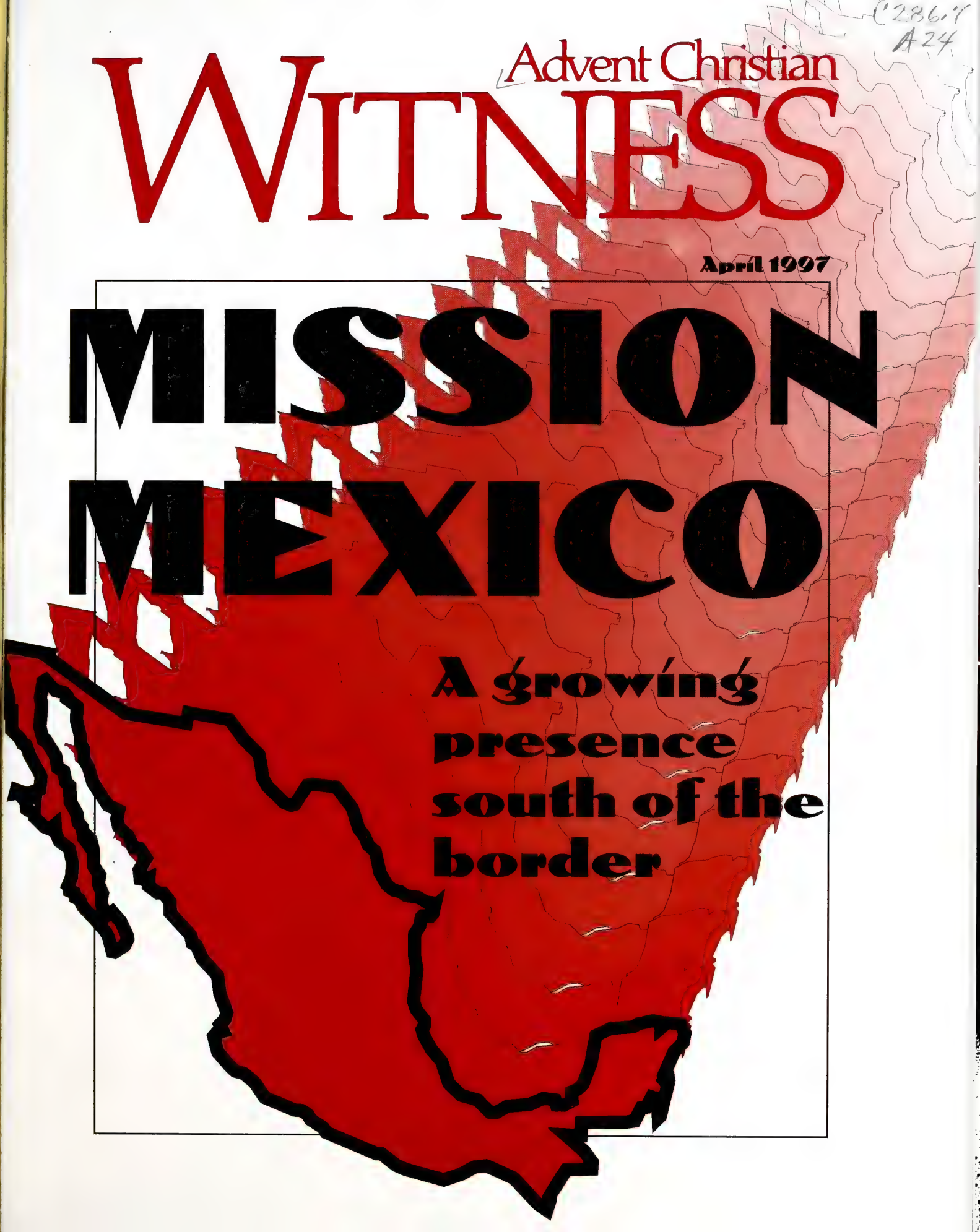
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Advent Christian
WITNESS

April 1997

MISSION MEXICO

A growing presence south of the border



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Over the past ten years, Advent Christians have established a missionary presence in Mexico that focuses on church planting and partnership with two ministries—Tecate Bible Institute and Mexican Medical Ministries.

The State of the Lost 8

Russell Carle challenges us to consider God's judgment on the those outside of Christ and become passionate about communicating the gospel to people who don't know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

No Joking Matter: The Biblical Doctrine of Hell 10

Freeman Barton explores what the Bible teaches regarding hell and final punishment

Building Friendships for Christ 12

In this excerpt from the 1997 WHFMS Program Kit, Nancy Pritchard suggests ways that we can build friendships with our neighbors as a way of sharing Jesus' love with them.

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On the Cover

Mexico, our neighbor to the south, is a country where many still need to hear the good news of the gospel.

Volume 45, Number 3

Advent Christian WITNESS

Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria

28 Pray that **Desire Ahola** and the Advent Christian congregation in Zagreb, Croatia, will have courage and boldness and they share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

29 Praise God for several **potential missionary contacts** received by the Department of World Missions.

30 Pray for mission leaders from throughout the world who will gather next month in **Johannesburg, South Africa**, for a worldwide missions consultation.

31 Praise God that our salvation rests in **God's grace** expressed through Jesus Christ.

8 Pray that **Malaysian** Advent Christians will have courage and boldness as they follow Christ and proclaim his love in a country where that can be difficult.

9 Praise God that he has given **David Vignali** the administrative ability necessary to handle a wide variety of tasks for Advent Christian missions in the Philippines.

10 Pray that God will richly bless **David Vignali** today as he serves in the Philippines.

11 Praise God that **Jeff and Penny Vann and their three children** are adjusting well to their missionary service in the Philippines.

12 Pray that the Lord will use **Jeff and Penny** to equip and disciple pastors and leaders as they continue to teach at Oro Bible College.



On the Edge of a Brave New World?

EVERY FEW years, a story comes along that captures our attention. On a late afternoon a few weeks back, our designer Dennis Peterson poked his head in my office and asked if I'd seen the small story in the Sunday *Charlotte Observer* about the successful cloning of a sheep in Scotland. "That means," Dennis told me, "that we now have the technology and the ability to clone human beings."

What started out as a small science story was suddenly the focus of numerous conversations around office water coolers across the country. By the time I got home and flipped on the news, the sheep-cloning story was being featured prominently on the three major networks, and was the subject of a one-half hour ethics panel on the PBS *News Hour with Jim Lehrer*. By midweek, sports columnists were speculating in jest about the possibilities of cloning Michael Jordan (or Dennis Rodman).

This scientific breakthrough could be as significant as splitting the atom was decades ago.

Amidst all of the debate, discussion, and humor has come the realization that this scientific breakthrough could be as significant as splitting the atom was decades ago. Like that event, the knowledge of how to clone animals, specifically mammals, has potential for tremendous good and almost unimaginable evil. "The debate over cloning," in the words of *World* magazine correspondent Bob Jones IV, "promises to be for the 21st century what the debate over slavery was for the 19th." Grasping the moral and ethical implications of cloning is something that all Christians—scholars, pastors, and laypeople—will be forced to address in the years to come.

To do that will require two things. First, we need to get beyond science fiction and make sure we understand what cloning is and isn't. Cloning means the artificial reproduction of a genetic duplicate. It does not mean the reproduction of the same individual life form over and over. For several decades, plant and animal breeders have used genetics to develop specialized breeds for a variety of legitimate purposes. The sheep-cloning project in Scotland is an extension of that research.

We also need to sharpen our knowledge of Scripture. The Bible teaches that all human life is valuable because human beings are created in God's image. That image, in my view, applies to the genetic codes that represent the building blocks of human life. No one can be sure what directions cloning technology will take. But Christians must challenge our society and its scientists to keep the value and dignity of human life at center stage.

That task, I fear, will become more difficult in the early decades of the twenty-first century. If we've discovered anything in the twentieth century, it's that scientific and technological advances do not necessarily create a better world. The same breakthroughs that gave us electricity, atomic power, and medical miracles have also made it possible for war, genocide, and violence to be perpetrated on frightfully large scales. Using and applying science and technology requires wisdom, something that I fear is in very short supply in our television and entertainment driven society.

As a Christian, I am not surprised by that. Scripture points us to the reality that although humanity reflects the image of God, that image has been distorted by the corrupting power of sin. No matter what technological and scientific advances we see in the decades to come, people will attempt to use them in ways to fulfill their desires toward lust, power, and greed. Christians need to do their scientific and ethical homework when it comes to cloning. But while we do that, we need to address issues like this in a way that recognizes both the value of human life and the reality of human sinfulness. ❑

Misión México

JUST BEFORE Jesus ascended into heaven, he told his disciples that they would receive power from the Holy Spirit and that "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). For Christians and Advent Christians in Canada and the United States, our Samaria is our southern neighbor Mexico, a nation with 90 million people who need to hear the good news of the Gospel.

Sombrero. Siesta. Fiesta. We know those words, and they often depict how most of us think of Mexico and her people. But those words hide the reality that the vast majority of Mexican people have had to wrestle with—an existence marred by poverty and political corruption with little apparent hope for change.

For many Americans and Canadians, Mexico is a vacation escape—a paradise for recreation and play. But the reality of life behind the "cactus curtain" is much different. Seventy percent of Mexico's 90 million people are of mixed ethnic background. Twenty-eight percent are Indians. And much of the population faces poverty, despair, hunger, and the disintegration of society. Alcoholism is rampant. Laws are passed to give people a raise in their standard of living. Those raises are then eaten up by inflation.

Why should Canadian and American Christians be concerned about Mexico? Ed Whitford, veteran missionary and observer of Christianity in Mexico, answers that question this way, "With the emergence of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), whether we like it or not, Mexico's problems are more and more becoming our problems." Rev. Whitford feels strongly that Mexico's problems have spiritual roots. "The spiritual problems that have plagued the nation for over 400 years are the cause of the political and social problems that Mexico faces. I think that if more Mexican leaders were committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ, honesty and integrity would begin to take hold in the political arena and righteousness would replace the indignity of an outgoing president raping the nation of its riches and leaving in shame."

Missions in Mexico

The first Spanish settlers arrived in Mexico in 1518 and by 1521 had conquered the region. With the Spanish conquerors came Roman Catholic priests and missionaries and for the next 300 years, Roman Catholicism dominated religious life in Mexico. The first Protestant missionary activity in Mexico, Bible distribution by the American Bible Society, began in 1824; but serious missionary activity did not begin until 1855. Throughout the rest of the 19th century, the major Protestant denominations began active missions work.

While missionary activity was greatly curtailed by government laws in the early 20th century, since the 1950s, evangelical Christians have again become active in communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the country. After several years of ministry in Guadalajara during the 1950s and 1960s, Advent Christian World Missions reentered Mexico in 1987 and centered its efforts on the Baja California region south of the California-Mexico border.

Director of World Missions Harold Patterson appointed a three-person field council (Ed Whitford, Louia Gransee, and Carlos Quintero) who arranged for church planters to go into strategic cities and begin their work of reaching those without Christ with the Gospel. Under their guidance, Advent Christian missions also began a cooperative venture with Tecate Bible Institute, a three-year

Advent Christian missions establishes a partnership and a growing presence south of the border

training school located near the California-Mexico border whose mission focuses on equipping Mexican nationals for pastoral and church-planting ministry. Advent Christian World Missions is actively working with Mexican Medical Ministries, a ministry that builds health clinics in Mexican communities where health-care services are almost non-existent. Several Advent Christian congregations have sent teams to work on Mexican Medical building projects and engage in important ministry activities like vacation Bible school.

Advent Christian church-planting ministry

The strategy that Advent Christian World Missions has established in Mexico focuses on using Mexican national church-planters to establish congregations in strategic Baja California communities. Advent Christian missionaries are currently establishing congregations in the following four communities:

1. El Florido: Located ten miles east of Tijuana near the California-Mexico border, the population of El Florido has exploded to over 500,000 residents. Pastor Alberto and Fabiola Gomez began their ministry in this rapidly growing community in 1987 and under their leadership, the first Advent Christian congregation in Baja California was established. El Florido is a poor community where people move frequently. Still Alberto and Fabiola have established a congregation of over forty people and have regular contact with many others in the community. Mexican Medical Ministries maintains a hospital in El Florido.

2. Ensenada: Ensenada, a city of over 500,000 people and located south of Tijuana, is one of the most stable cities in Mexico. Since January 1996, Pastor Mario and Elena Cortez have been developing a program to reach into the community. Mexico field superintendent Carlos Quintero is encouraged by their progress. Mario and Elena come to Advent Christian World Missions from the Nazarene Church for whom he planted several congregations in Mexico.

3. La Purisima: La Purisima is located two-thirds of the way down Baja California, about six-hundred miles south of Tijuana. Pastor Joel and Omega Garcia are working to establish an Advent Christian congregation in this community that has no evangelical church of any kind. In addition, Mexican Medical is building a health clinic on the same site as the church.

Joel and Omega have five children, three of whom are already in or are preparing to enter the ministry. Their eldest son, Juan Luis, serves with them in La Purisima as youth pastor. Joel and Omega have had previous church-planting experience and began their work with Advent Christian World Missions in 1995.

4. San Luis, Rio Coronado: The newest Advent Christian church-planting effort began in mid-1996 in this community located just south of the Baja California provincial capital of Mexicali. Pastor Idelfonso Garcia, the oldest son of Joel and Omega Garcia, and his wife Anita, serve as church planters in this community and through weekly Bible studies have already made contact with a good number of people.

In addition to these four church-planting ministries, the Advent Christian partnership with Tecate Bible Institute has been strengthened through the ministry of Dr. David A. Dean and Dr. Robert Fillinger. Drs. Dean and Fillinger are Advent Christians who have served on the faculty at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. During the 1990s, they have each spent several weeks at Tecate Bible Institute working with faculty, administrators, and students and helping with curriculum design and teaching. This small institute has graduated over 130 Mexican nationals into pastoral and church-planting ministry throughout Mexico.

Pray for the Advent Christian Mexico Mission

Mexico is a nation where people are open to hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ. But how will they hear without people willing and trained to preach the good news of God's love. This is where we as Advent Christians come in. We must continue to send those who can teach the Gospel and touch lives for Jesus Christ. Your financial support of Penny Crusade and Advent Christian United Ministries is vital to the ministry of Alberto and Fabiola Gomez, Mario and Elena Cortez, Joel and Omega Garcia, Idelfonso and Anita Garcia, and Juan Luis Garcia. Even more important is your prayer support for these Christian workers.

- Pray that God will give each of

our Christian workers wisdom and discernment as they communicate the gospel to the people in their communities.

- Pray that as our national missionaries begin to organize Advent Christian congregations and disciple new converts, they will sense God's leading and direction.

- Pray for the faculty and students at Tecate Bible Institute— that God will supply their needs and equip them for future pastoral and church-planting ministry throughout Mexico.

- Pray for our Mexico field council, Ed Whitford, Louia Gransee, and our field superintendent Carlos Quintero, as they oversee the work of Advent Christian missions in Mexico.

- Pray that God will use the ministry of Mexican Medical Ministries as a vehicle to meet the physical and spiritual needs of many Mexican citizens.

- Praise God for the commitment of several Advent Christian congregations who have sent work teams to Mexico for ministry there.

- Pray that many lives will be touched for Jesus Christ as Advent Christian World Missions works in partnership with Tecate Bible Institute and Mexican Medical Mission in the years to come.

Mexico is a country with many serious problems, but a country that is slowly coming to life on the world stage. As we enter the 21st century, Advent Christian World Missions is committed to establishing a strong presence in this growing nation. ❑

Ed Whitford contributed to this article and serves on the staff of Mexican Medical Mission. He helped establish Tecate Bible Institute and has spent most of his adult life establishing ministries to touch lives for Jesus Christ in Mexico.

ALZHEIMER'S

A Test of Faith

Miriam Snow Priebe
Mechanic Falls, Maine

AFTER WE reach age 70, having survived accident, arthritis, cancer, and many other diseases, we are suddenly faced with the grim possibility of Alzheimer's disease. Hopefully, as Christians we have given thanks daily for our health across the years. We have faced the fact that our time on earth is short but we're trusting Christ for eternal life after death. Why does the threat of Alzheimer's disease so shake us?

For one thing we hear so much about it. We are bombarded with information—sometimes conflicting. While we're aware that not everybody gets the disease, there are more than a million people in our country who do. We know that the disease progresses from more or less harmless memory loss to loss of judgment, inability to care for oneself, incontinence, and finally—mercifully—death. Every one of us knows someone whose family is suffering as they watch this inevitable process being played out in someone they love.

We don't want that to happen to us. We don't want our families torn apart by our slow disintegration.

Mental illness of any kind is a terrible test of our faith. We, who have had family members suffering from various forms of insanity, know the sorrow and heartache it brings to all—patient and family alike. But the cruel thing about Alzheimer's disease is that it happens to people at the end of a long useful and productive life. We, who are fortunate enough to have lived a life free of mental sickness, suddenly see the possibility of losing our precious sanity right at the end of our lives. Will our families, instead of mourning our loss, be praying for our deaths as we languish in some nursing home unaware of their misery?

Elizabeth Goudge has always been one of my favorite authors and there was something in her novel, *The Scent of Water*, which has helped me deal with the thought of losing my sanity. In her book a young girl who has bouts of insanity pours out her fears to an old vicar.

"Here I was laying it all out in front of him. I was like a criminal emptying my pockets. I took out everything. He was silent for a long time, rubbing his chin, and then he said, 'You're afraid of it?' It seemed a silly question and I said sharply, 'Of course I am, I'm terrified.'

"'Why?' he asked. 'If you lose your reason you lose it into the hands of God...It's safe there you know.'

"Then the old priest made a suggestion: 'My dear,' he said. 'There are three necessary prayers and they are these: Lord have mercy. Thee I adore. Into thy hands. Not difficult to remember. If in times of distress you hold to these you will do well.'"

I have found these prayers to be so helpful in facing all sorts of crises. They help me now as I face an uncertain old age.

Lord, forgive my sins in Christ's name. Lord, I love you and I can trust you with my life. Lord, into your hands I commit my sanity. Into your hands I commit those I love. Watch over my family and keep them through my last years and after I am gone. You, alone, know what is good for me and for them. Strengthen my faith as I face these last years. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory—forever and ever. Amen! ❑

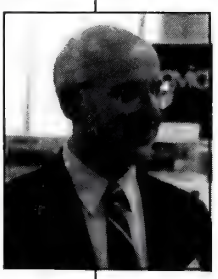
Questions and Answers

with Edward Fudge

A pastor in Florida quotes the biblical passage which says that the dead know nothing, and asks how to square that with the account of Jesus' Transfiguration, in which Moses and Elijah briefly appear and talk with Jesus, then disappear again.

Indeed, the Bible describes the dead as going down into Sheol (Hebrew) or Hades (Greek), the "unseen realm" for which one might easily coin the English name "Gravedom." In that "land of forgetfulness," that domain of "darkness" (Ps. 88:11-12), they are cut off from life and from enjoying blessings from God's hand (Ps. 88:5).

Most often, in both the Old and New Testaments, Scripture pictures the state of the dead as "sleep," not only because that is what it resembles, but, more importantly, because from this state one day there will be a great awakening (Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29). The Christian's hope for life beyond the grave rests solely and securely in God's power and promise to raise the dead, not in some amorphous theory about the supposed immortality of human souls (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:16-19). God only has immortality. (1 Tim. 6:16). Anyone else becomes immortal only as a result of God's gracious gift



The Transfiguration story is not inconsistent with these general biblical principles. According to Matthew's account, Jesus himself explained the appearance of Moses and Elijah as a "vision" (Matt. 17:9). If we allow that word its usual meaning of a waking dream, the story says nothing at all about the condition of the deceased. Even if this were not a "vision," it would be no greater problem for God to bring Moses and Elijah temporarily back from the dead than it was for Jesus to temporarily revive dead Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, or the son of the widow of Nain.

The primary point of this marvelous occurrence, of course, was to encourage Jesus and his three apostles with a glimpse, on the eve of his suffering and death, of the "glory" that awaited Jesus on the other side of the grave in his resurrection and exaltation to God's right hand. It is fair to say that the striking events witnessed that day made an indelible impression on those who beheld them (2 Peter 1:16-18; 1 John 1:1-3).

What does it mean to "know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord?

Biblically, I speak of the individual who trusts Jesus' work alone for salvation, atonement, and reconciliation with God, and who, in dependence on Christ alone as Savior, commits him/her self to Jesus as Lord and master. The New Testament also describes these as people

- who hear Jesus' words and act on them (Matt. 7:24);
- who deny themselves, take up their cross, follow Jesus, and find life (Mark 8:34-35);
- whose hearts burn within them as they encounter the risen Christ, and who therefore seek him in the Scriptures and in the present moment (Luke 24:32);
- who believe on Jesus and have eternal life (John 3:15), who practice truth and come to the light (John 3:21), who abide in Jesus (John 15:4), who know the only true God and his Son Jesus Christ (John 17:3);
- who repent and return and enjoy seasons of refreshment from the presence of God (Acts 3:19);
- who wait for the Lord Jesus Christ, who love his appearing, who are known by God, who are called according to his purpose, who are seated with Christ in heavenly places, who are his elect, who are complete in him, who walk in love, who walk in the Spirit, who walk by faith and not by sight, and on and on and on throughout the biblical phraseology from first to last.

Such people will be obedient to Christ's commandments, but always imperfectly, according to their knowledge of them, which also is always imperfect. God, who knows our hearts, also knows infallibly those who are his. We must rely on outward profession and appearances, which may be either pretended or sincere, false or genuine, short-lived or permanent. But that is the best we can do.

And so with that, limited as it may be, I will receive as God's friend and my spiritual fellow-pilgrim every person who tells me s/he trusts Jesus for salvation and seeks to follow him as Lord, and who, by apparent intent of life including confession and repentance, manifests a lifestyle consistent with that profession.

Our pastor has retired after a lengthy tenure and we are seek-

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The State of the Lost

Russell Carle
Auckland, N.Z.

SOME YEARS ago while pastoring at Bear Point Advent Christian Church, I attended one of the Nova Scotia Conference meetings. Over a meal at the home of one of the members of the hosting church, the husband told me of being 200 miles out on the Atlantic Ocean on a stormy night. He and another hired hand were on the deck when a huge wave smashed down. He found himself doing the dog-paddle in the pitch-black night one moment. The next, he found the deck of the boat rise to meet his feet.

When he and the captain got the boat's lights back on, they could find no trace of the other man on board. Taking a spotlight, they began searching the waves. Just at the edge of the beam of light they saw a hand wave briefly. They raced the boat back and hauled their exhausted friend, still in all his rain gear, back into the boat. That man never went fishing again. He had come face-to-face with his mortality.

It is a terrible thing, a frightening thing, to be mortal. Those who believe in life only in Jesus seem to have forgotten that the real call for the Church of Jesus Christ and all its members, whatever organizations to which they belong, is reaching those who are lost without Jesus Christ. We have been sidetracked into extended arguments about what worship pleases the Lord the most. We have been studying how right our conditionalist doctrine is. We have been always preparing to communicate and never getting around to doing it.

They...

Consider with me this brief passage from Isaiah's prophecy: "They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame" (Isaiah 13:8). There are people who will burn on judgment day—all of those outside Jesus Christ. That includes my relatives and yours, as well and men, woman, gurus, professional athletes, and even some who read this message.

In discipling a young couple, I discovered that the wife was coming to grips with the fate of the lost. She had been an unthinking universalist. "There is a little girl across my street who I noticed playing as I was leaving my house. Will she be lost?" she asked. It was a difficult Bible study that evening as I showed them text after text that says explicitly that those who are without Jesus are condemned already.

Will...

"Who will tell that little girl about Jesus?" my friend asked. I told her what I tell you, that if you don't reach the little girls and their parents in your neighborhood with the gospel of Jesus that they will be destroyed. It is as certain as the fact that those who have the Son have life.

Those who are conditionalists ought to be in the vanguard of Christians who are passionate about saving the lost.

Universalism is what our culture assumes. Its creed runs like this: Humanity is basically good. God lets good people into heaven. Therefore everyone is going to heaven. Complacency in evangelism is the result of Christians not honestly wrestling with the words the Bible uses about the fate of the lost. Sadly some Advent Christians, I fear, are closet universalists.

The couple mentioned above led a half-dozen families in their immediate neighborhood to Christ. They are some of the most ardent soul winners I know. What about you? Are you pretending to care that what God wants matters to you?

Look at each other aghast...

Isaiah conveys a sense of horror at the judgment of God. There will be a shared terror at judgment day. The church has too long ignored Biblical language in order to candy-coat God. And people have lost their fear of the Lord, a fear that is the beginning of wisdom. I recently preached to a group of almost 140 young Christians from various churches at a camp. I asked how many had ever heard a "hell-fire" sermon? One in the crowd had.

A new Christian asked me after church one Sunday, "What about my

father? He passed away without hearing the gospel. What will happen to him?" I said that the doctrine of conditional immortality had a certain comfort in it since those who didn't know Christ would burn up and not suffer forever. With horror and with tears in her eyes, this young woman exclaimed, "We are talking about my father!" I burned with shame that I could talk about comfort in such a way to one grieving over the tragedy of a lost father.

Their faces aflame

There are great portions of the Scriptures that the church steers clear of for fear of offending. Do you believe that such an action is an offense to God?

At a camp one summer, for the first Bible study, I shared with the children that God is angry with sinners and if they continue in a state of rebellion against him when he has given his Son for them, they would be destroyed. My text for this message is just one of the many, many passages which graphically makes this point. The other four Bible studies I did focus on the love of God expressed in Jesus Christ. A third of the camp made decisions for Christ that week. After camp the members of the board received a call from an angry parent, a professing Christian. She complained that her child was crying one night because she was afraid her grandmother might be lost. Friend, I think that is an appropriate thing to cry about. My question to you is, why don't you cry about that?

Those who are conditionalists ought to be in the vanguard of Christians who are passionate about saving the lost. Instead we find many saying, "Isn't it wonderful that they won't suffer that much." Such hardness of heart is detestable! While serving as a guest speaker in a conference, I asked the congregation how many had read their Bibles that week. Almost everyone raised a hand. I asked how many had invited someone to church that week. Almost no one raised a hand. I asked how many had asked someone to church to in the last month. Two or three more hands went up out of a full church. What about you? Do you study the Bible diligently while straining its message to suit yourself, continuing on in complacency and rebellion?

Whenever I tell people that I am working to establish a church in the village of Piha, New Zealand, anyone that knows the place always asks, "Why?" What they mean is that with only 800 people in the community, it will never have a mega-church. The assumption is that church planting is about building an empire of mega-churches and making Advent Christians proud of my success. I always have the same answer. There are bout 800 people in Piha who don't have a Gospel witness. Where can we find people who will care about the lost and put their needs first?

Excuses

"People don't want to hear," you might say. How would anyone who doesn't keep at witnessing know? They might want to hear! Everyone has times in their lives of wondering; questioning; searching for answers, for meaning, for God. If we don't communicate Christ, people go with the Jehovah's Witnesses, Hare Krishna, or whatever. And they will "stare at each other aghast, their faces aflame."

Some people are nervous about inviting someone to church. Let's be honest and say that everyone is nervous about it.

When Jeremiah was commissioned by God to speak to Israel, God told him that he wanted Jeremiah to know right up front that no one was ever going to heed his message. God was sending Jeremiah to speak for him because he wanted them to have the chance anyway. Has God changed?

Some people are nervous about inviting someone to church. Let's be honest and say that everyone is nervous about it, to some extent or other. Let your mind go back to Calvary's hill. Don't look at Christ yet. Simply walk to the foot of the cross and look at how much blood is on the ground. Now let your mind's eye wander up from the bottom of the cross. Look at how much blood is on the cross. To complete this meditation stand close, very close, and look at Jesus' feet. Now try telling Jesus that you are nervous.

I don't profess to be the perfect Christian or the perfect witness. In fact, if there is a mistake to be made in witnessing, I have made it. I know there will be some people on judgment day who would have every right to say to me, "You could have told me but you didn't!" I know that when I enter God's kingdom, all my sins, sins of omission as well as commission, will be under God's grace. Shall I continue in sin that grace might abound? Absolutely not. Will you?

I have limited my message primarily to the dreadful state of the lost. I hope that I have penetrated your husk of complacency and stirred your heart's compassion for your children, grandchildren, and the people you call your friends. Yet there are selfish reasons for witnessing. Here is one. Without it, your obedience to Christ will be incomplete. You cannot continue in willful disobedience to Christ and not have it affect your joy, your prayers, your peace. As Paul said, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"

When I was eight years old, I was saved. My pastor shared from the word of God shortly afterwards that to grow as a Christian required three disciplines: personal devotions, fellowship, and witnessing. I began my devotions in Genesis one. Because of godly parents, as a child I never had the option of missing a Sunday in church.

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No Joking Matter: The Biblical Doctrine of Hell

Freeman Barton
South Hamilton, Mass.

A HIGH SCHOOL classmate of mine used to say, "Don't swear; it sounds like hell." In modern secular culture, hell tends to be a profane joke. Not so in the New Testament. There it is a life and death issue treated with all seriousness. In the Bible, hell is the instrument for eliminating evil preparatory to the perfection of Christ's eternal kingdom.

The word "hell"

The word as used in Scripture is relatively simple to understand. In the King James Version it is used forty-three times to translate four different words: sheol (31), hades (10), tartars (1), gehenna (12). Sheol (Hebrew) and Hades (Greek) are words for the grave, the realm of the dead. They relate to the intermediate state after the judgment. Contemporary versions tend to leave them untranslated (NRSV) or to translate them as "grave" or "death" (NIV; see, for example, Jonah 2:2, Isa. 38:10, 18). Tartarus is the place where fallen angels are kept until the judgment (2 Peter 2:4).

Gehenna is the only one of the four relevant to the final disposition of unbelievers. It is the Greek form of the Hebrew Ge-hinnom, the Valley of Hinnom, which borders Jerusalem to the south. The worst of Judah's kings offered infant sacrifices there to the pagan god, Moloch, giving it a negative image of fire and death. James warns that their tongue may be "set on fire" by Gehenna (3:6).

Jesus uses the word eleven times, seven in Matthew, three in Mark, once in Luke. The four occurrences in Mark and Luke are parallel to four occurrences in Matthew. Three times close together in Matthew 5 Jesus warns of the danger of being cast into Gehenna (vv. 22, 29, 30). Twice he uses it in connection with the Pharisees (Matt. 23:15, 33). We are left then with four distinct contexts to determine what Jesus meant by Gehenna: Matt. 5: Matt. 23; Matt. 10:28; Matt. 18:9.

In Matthew 5 (the Sermon on the Mount), those who misbehave (call a brother "fool," offend by eye or hand) are liable to be thrown into "the hell of fire" (similarly 18:9). In their zeal, the Pharisees tend to make converts who are "twice as much a child of hell as yourselves" (Matt. 23:15).

"How can you escape being sentenced to hell?" (23:33).

The particularly instructive passage is Matthew 10:28/Luke 12:5. "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell...But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell."

Note the parallel here between the first death and the second which is the result of the last judgment. Just as the body is destroyed in the first death, so the whole person is destroyed in Gehenna. Note too the sequence, which is particularly clear in Luke: the person is

killed, then burnt up in Gehenna. Many, probably most, of those cast into Gehenna are already dead. Gehenna eliminates the remains.

The vocabulary of destruction

Fire

The limited information gained from the word "hell" (Gehenna) is supplemented by a host of passages which have been well summarized as "the vocabulary of destruction." Some of them use the same imagery of fiery destruction suggested by the word "hell." John five times in Revelation 19-21 speaks of a "lake of fire" (19:20; 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8). First the beast and the false prophet "are thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur." Then Satan joins them, then "death and Hades," and finally "anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life."

Fruitless trees, chaff, weeds, and inedible fish are cast into the fire (Matt. 3:10, 12; 7:19; 13:40, 48). The Son of Man sends out angels to gather "all causes of sin and all evildoers" who will be thrown into "the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:42, 50). The purpose of the fire is not primarily to torment, although many will experience pain, but to burn up the refuse.

Destruction

The words "destroy," "destruction," and "perish," and images of destruction, are often associated with final punishment.

Comparing the judgment of the ancient world by flood to the final judgment, Peter declares, "The present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless" (2 Peter 3:7). Jesus also compared the final destruction of evil to the flood and the destruction of Sodom (Luke 17:26-30).

Jesus uses two striking parallels in Luke 13. Pilate had slaughtered a number of Galilean worshipers. Eighteen people had been killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them. Had they been particularly sinful? "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did" (vv. 3, 5).

And back to Matthew 10:28—"fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

Death

In the New Testament to destroy a living being simply means to kill him. The flood killed everyone not on the ark; the people of Sodom were killed. This "destruction" is in keeping with the fact that the penalty for sin is death—literal death, the loss of conscious animate existence. One of the verses early memorized by the diligent Sunday school student is Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The penalty imposed on fallen mankind was literal physical death—"in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Gen 2:17). "...you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:19). The penalty which Christ paid for the sins of mankind was literal physical death on the cross. "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3). The unbeliever pays the penalty for his own sin—death, "eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (2 Thess. 1:9).

No. Hell is no joking matter. Life and death, a glorious life or a fearsome death, are the issues. Capital punishment, the most serious of all punishments, is the penalty for persistent unbelief. The condemned are deprived of that abundant life which the believer inherits. We cannot ignore this reality in our lives and witness.

The other side of the coin

This topic is essentially negative. The intent, however, is positive. Gehenna is the dump where the trash of this fallen age is eliminated. "All causes of sin and all evildoers" are destroyed so that "the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43). "The present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless...but, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home" (2 Peter 3:7, 13). "Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more" (Rev. 21:4).

Maranatha. ❑

Freeman Barton serves on the staff of Goddard Library at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. He is the author of *Heaven, Hell, and Hades* and the editor of *Henceforth.*

Lost from page 9

I went to my schoolmates to witness. The only way I knew to witness at that time was to try to make everyone stop swearing. Over the years I have tried everything else I could think of; and what I have found is that the burden for the lost and the willingness to share come before all the tools, training, and practice. What you must do is start and start now. It is after we fail that earnest prayer comes naturally. It is after we have said the wrong thing that we begin asking the Holy Spirit for his leading. That is when the best witnessing takes place. I have noticed that new believers that will try are more effective than old believers who wait for additional training.

If you have read this and are convinced that you are lost or fear that you might be, and you want to be saved, contact your pastor. Or write to me Russell Carle, 11 Rosehill Dr, Papakura, Auckland 1702, New Zealand. ❑

This article is the text of an address given by New Zealand Advent Christian missionary Russell Carle to the Conditional Immortality Association in that country.

Building Friendships for Christ

Nancy Pritchard
Melrose, Mass.

LIVING IN one neighborhood for thirty-four years as a landlady in a two-family home, I continue to learn valuable lessons about developing relationships with non-believers, yearning to share Christ with them. Christian tenants have blessed our lives during these years. One of our earliest tenants was a young Christian couple. At the time we were going through the turbulent years of a daughter who was rebelling against our guidance. We asked them to pray when they sensed turmoil. Now, twenty-three years later, I have had the pleasure of writing to this couple, and sharing that God has "done more than we could think or ask." That daughter is now a minister of outreach in my home church!

When we first moved into our community, it didn't take long to discover our next-door neighbor had five children! When we finished weeding in our gardens, this neighbor would serve me coffee in a bone china cup. Although we were of different faiths, her children were delighted to attend vacation Bible school at my church in the summer! These neighbors stated that they were influenced when they watched our family go to church each Sunday. We were saying something to our neighbors about our faith by "remembering the Sabbath day, and keeping it holy."

It was impressed upon me early on that I was driving in and out of my driveway to attend committee and church meetings, and passing by neighbors that I did not know. Then I discovered that a next-door neighbor had a baby, and I didn't even know she was expecting!

Resting in Christ

Soon after, I became friends with another new neighbor. She had four children, including a set of twins. Each time this hospitable friend made coffee and invited me over, I felt compelled to share my joy in Christ with her. However, it was not until I learned to "rest" in Christ and first build a relationship, that, four years later, God answered my heart's desire. One bleak day her husband abandoned her family. After having tried to disprove the resurrection of Christ to me, she was now asking me to come over and pray with her! While her heart was broken, one day I planted tulips in her garden, praying that when they came up in the spring she would have "new life in Christ." The following spring I walked past her tulips in bloom, and I stood in awe of a powerful God who had answered that prayer!

If you don't have a non-Christian friend, ask the Lord to open your eyes and heart to embrace a lost sheep who does not know the Shepherd.

It wasn't long before a weekly Bible study crowded her home, and then multiplied. Through our church's vacation Bible school and Christmas school, three more neighbors became interested in spiritual things, attended the neighborhood Bible study, and came to a new-found faith in Christ. I have discovered that the easiest way to enter the hearts of unbelievers is to care about their children and then invite them to some of the programs that your church offers.

Another way to build intentional relationships is to bake for a new neighbor and welcome them into your neighborhood, or to bake a meal for a family when there is an illness or a death. I have learned to "risk" the chance of how someone may react. If I feel God nudge me to put my faith into action, then I venture out and leave the results to him.

One of our tenants came to know Christ right after her first child was born. Her mother came from out of state to help her after the baby was

born. And while talking with her mom, I discovered she was a believer. One night she went to church with me, and we prayed together in the car for her daughter and family before coming into our separate apartments. I truly believe that God moves in a special way when two or three people pray together. In a few months her daughter prayed a quiet prayer of faith while sitting at her kitchen table alone. Her mother had returned home, grateful that her daughter's landlords were Christians. Now years later, while living in another state, my former tenant and I correspond, and she is a growing sister in Christ.

Pray and care

While writing this article, I yearn once again to share the Savior with now another precious family, living next door. We have invited them to use our yard. They also use our garage for storage. During summer they landscape our yard, and in the winter they snow blow our long driveway.

This neighbor's relative asked him why he didn't go to church, and he replied, "My church is doing good to my neighbors." I pray that some day he may desire to worship God also! In the meantime, I am learning about intensive prayer for the souls of my neighbors, and also caring about their physical and emotional needs. When this family sends us a picture of their family in their Christmas card, I place it in my loose-leaf prayer notebook along with pictures of loved ones, my church, and so on. As I turn the pages in prayer, I am focused to pray for those faces whom I look at. We take an in-depth interest in their three sons when we see them in our yard.

Intentional relationships, intensive prayer, and in-depth caring bring about opportunities in the marketplace also. Listening to your co-worker's needs, being willing to do more on your job than is expected of you, speaking only of those things that are of a "good report" (this eliminates gossip), and showing up at some of the social activities will develop friendships. Don't be surprised if the Holy Spirit leads you into a conversation about the Christian faith and you find yourself feeling like a "spectator" watching God do all the work!

In-depth caring in your church life or neighborhood can include sending a care package of cookies to college students who live away from home. When they see you in church or in your neighborhood, they will have a warm feeling for someone who cared.

Make a mental list of your non-Christian friends whom you would most like to see come to Christ. Begin "intensive prayer" for them. Plan time for them in your busy schedule. Demonstrate "in-depth" caring for them. Would you consider two or three—or even one? If you don't have a non-Christian friend, ask the Lord to open

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ing a replacement. Can you offer any biblical suggestions to help us in this process?

I can relate to your concern quite well, since the congregation I serve as an elder is also seeking a replacement for our preaching minister who resigned seven months ago after more than two decades with our church.

I apologize for my lack of helpfulness, but honestly know little to suggest from a biblical standpoint concerning the search process itself. The modern institutional church with buildings, budgets, and professional staff is an invention more recent than the Bible, so we lack specific scriptural guidance in these matters.

However, we can derive a biblical picture of the kind of person we might wish to occupy the pulpit and to provide leadership to the flock. (For the role we moderns often call "senior minister," we should probably look in the New Testament under "teaching elder" or "pastor/teacher.") Such an individual should certainly be filled with the Spirit, be gifted as a teacher and as a public proclaimer, possess a shepherd heart and a servant spirit, and manifest a character which adorns the gospel and which attracts rather than repels persons for the sake of Jesus Christ.

I am confident that we may expect divine guidance in such a search, primarily from outside the Bible itself, in answer to fervent prayer. This direction may come through some combination of circumstances, a unity of heart, instinctive recognition of the right person, a dream or vision, a revelatory word, or by some other means. Of course, one should interpret all non-canonical guidance in the light of clear biblical principles. However, we may confidently rely on God's contemporary leading, and we may trust his promises throughout the Bible that he is with us and will guide us in doing his will.

"Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever" (Heb. 13:20-21). ❑

Friendships continued from page 13

your eyes and heart to embrace a lost sheep who does not know the Shepherd. ❑

Nancy Pritchard and her husband, Charles, are members of Faith Evangelical Church (A.C.) in Melrose, Mass., where she serves as clerk and adult Sunday school teacher. She is WHFMS Heritage Conference secretary and WHFMS coordinator of children's ministries for the Eastern Region. Nancy is a secretary in the medical field. She has two daughters, four grandchildren, and enjoys rug braiding, writing, and walking. From *Pass Through the Gates*, the 1997 WHFMS Program Kit.

Editor's Note:
Due to a production error, the May 1997 Mission Prayer Partnership has been inserted separately into this issue. We apologize for any inconvenience.

May

1 Praise God for the vision and burden he has given New Zealand Advent Christian missionary **Russell Carle** to establish a congregation in the coastal community of Piha.

2 Pray that God will continue to give **Russell, Noelle, and their three children** a strong sense of his presence with them as they serve in New Zealand.

3 Praise God for the continued growth and ministry of Advent Christian congregations in **India**.

4 Pray that God will raise up **missionary candidates** to oversee Advent Christian ministry in India.

5 Praise God for the continued ministry of **Marion Damon** and **Barbara White** in India.

6 Pray that the Lord will give **Marion and Barbara** wisdom and strength for the many administrative and ministry-oriented tasks that they will face throughout this week.

13 Praise God for the ministry and service our our new WHFMS coordinator **Luree Wotton**.

14 Pray for Asia/Pacific Area Director **George Teshera** as he travels this month to India to lead a conference for Advent Christian pastors in that country.

15 Praise God for the willingness of **Floyd and Musa Powers** to serve in Japan for six months while Steven and Ann Lay are home on furlough.

16 Pray for **Steven and Ann Lay**, and their daughter BethAnn, as BethAnn continues medical treatment.

17 Praise God that the gospel of Jesus Christ continues to be communicated in **China**.

18 Pray that God will protect our Advent Christian congregations and people in **China**.

19 Praise God for effective growth and ministry in several of our **urban and ethnic ministries** in the United States.

20 Pray that God will give continued vision and discernment to Rev. **John Roller**, our coordinator for urban and ethnic ministries.

21 Praise God for positive responses to the ministry of Pastor **Johnson Raju** as he works to establish an Advent Christian congregation among Asian Indians in Montgomery County, Maryland.

22 Pray for Pastor **Frances Ssebikindu** and Living Water Advent Christian Church in Memphis, Tennessee, as they seek the Lord's will regarding relocation of their congregation.

23 Praise God for the effective ministry that **Frank Jewett**, **Harold Turner**, and **Aloysius Okon** were able to accomplish on their three-week trip to the west-African nations of Nigeria and Ghana.

24 Pray for Pastor **Amos Gbaa** as he continues to establish an Advent Christian congregation in Ghana.

25 Praise God for students graduating from **Tecate Bible College** who will now go on to serve Jesus Christ throughout their native Mexico.

26 Pray for our **Mexican national missionaries** as they continue to engage in church-planting ministries in



Tony Campolo

Healthcare and Christian Responsibility

THERE'S A LOT of talk these days about what the government should and should not be doing. Many believe that over the past few decades the government tried to do too much, and consequently, failed at many well-intentioned efforts while wasting billions of the taxpayers' dollars. Furthermore, many in the Christian community have come to believe that the government has been trying to do things for people that the church really should be doing. But there is one huge social problem that the church is not capable of handling in any practical sense; and it is a problem that can no longer be ignored.

Many Christians reacted adversely to the proposals made by the Clinton administration for a national healthcare program. Perhaps it was the result of the antipathy that some harbored toward the first family. Or, maybe it was the fear generated in the media by special interest groups, such as insurance companies and some in the medical field. **Whatever** the reason, America in general, and evangelical Christians in particular, stood against the proposed national health plan, and the status quo was maintained.

Now that the elections are over, it is time to take another look at the problem and come up with some answers. It is unacceptable to have one out of every seven Americans **unprotected** from medical disasters, and another one-seventh of the population underinsured. With the cost of medical care so high, a serious illness or accident can bring financial ruin on any hard-working, middle-class family. For the **poor** the problem is even worse. With so many workers in part-time jobs or in jobs without benefits, health insurance becomes an impossible dream. I know of some poor single parents who believe that they have to stay on welfare just because the only jobs available do not have health plans. Those on welfare get at least minimal coverage from the government.

Some doctors and the insurance companies were upset with the government's proposed comprehensive health plan because it would standardize payments for medical procedures. Indeed it would! But if, for example, you have to pay $5,000 for an emergency heart treatment in one hospital and only $1,500 for the same treatment in a neighboring hospital, we have to ask if procedures *should* be standardized. And when a heart attack is in progress, one hardly shops around for the lowest price.

There are those who pointed out that the proposed plan was too complex. But what was not pointed out was that the present system is, itself, too complex. In a local hospital I found that there are over **3,200 types** of accounts receivable for insurance claims, and that in administering these plans, it takes 300 people to do what a Canadian hospital does with three people.

There are those who say that what was being proposed was socialized medicine. But that's not true! Consider the fact that in Pennsylvania, where I live, every driver is required to have liability car insurance. Private companies sell that insurance, not the government. There is nothing socialized about that. What was being proposed was a system wherein all employers would have to enter into some arrangement to provide standardized coverage for their workers. It would have been a private, not a socialized, system.

We, as Christians, have to come up with some kind of answer. We cannot turn our backs on **millions** on uninsured Americans. We cannot perpetuate a health system wherein some doctors deliberately avoid some patients because it is known that they cannot pay. We cannot allow companies to opt for part-time workers to avoid providing medical coverage for their employees, or going with younger workers who are better health risks.

If we are upset with the Clinton administration's plan, what do we suggest as an alternative? It is our moral obligation to create a society in which we pursue "the common good," as the Constitution suggests, in our consideration of health services. And it is a **Christian** responsibility to do something about health care simply because the Lord requires that we care for the sick and the infirm. In churches across the nation, let the discussion begin. Answers are needed. ❑



Dowling Park

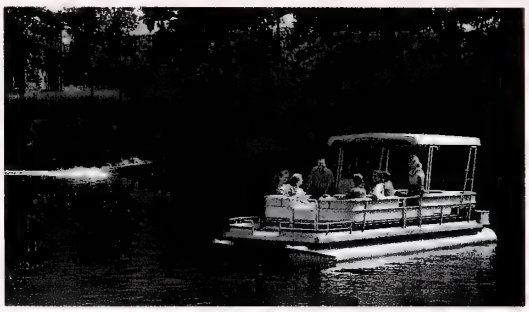
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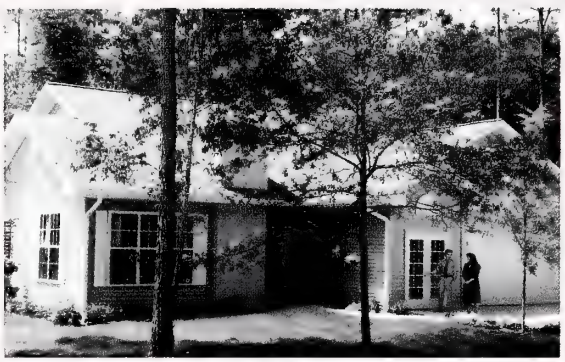
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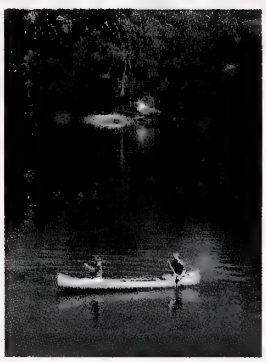
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Advent Christian
WITNESS

May 1997

GOD'S LIBERATING LOVE

"If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."
John 8:36

"For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out Abba! Father!"
Romans 8:15

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."
Galatians 5:1

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
Romans 8:1

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God loves us completely, and in that love we can find true freedom.

Volume 45, Number 4

Advent Christian WITNESS

Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy**

Typesetter **Leslie Suderley** Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria



CAUTION: GOD AT WORK

I USED TO subscribe to *USA Today*. Like many of its readers, I welcomed the first national news paper with its two-page spread of news from fifty states and a sports section that reached far beyond the parochial concerns of any local newspaper.

After a few months, I found that reading *USA Today* had become somewhat frustrating and the focus of my discontent was the editorial page. It wasn't the editorial slant but the way they structured the content of the page. The editorial staff designed the page so that it would focus on a different political, cultural, or social issue each day. After reading the publication five days a week for several months, I was well past the saturation point. There were simply too many issues for an average individual to understand and grasp, let alone care about, and the editors did little to help me understand which issues were more important than others.

Our task is to discern what God is doing and discover how he wants us to be involved in that.

What deserves our attention?

My experience with *USA Today* is similar to what many Christians face with the constant barrage of solicitations to support causes and ministries, boycott products, elect candidates to public office, and write letters to newspapers and government officials. How do we decide which things deserve our time, attention, and limited resources? Failing to ask that question often leads us down one of two directions, both of which fail Jesus' commands to his followers to practice love for God and love for people. We either ignore the world around us. Or we become overly involved to the point of frustration and burnout

So how do we discern what deserves our time and support? Naturally, no two followers of God will answer that question in exactly the same way. Jesus calls those who follow him to different aspects of God's kingdom work. So how God leads you will most likely be at least somewhat different from how he leads me. Given that reality, there are two principles and two questions that we should bear in mind.

First, Jesus reminds us that God's purposes are wrapped up in the words of the Great Commission: "Go and make disciples of all the nations." Our task as his followers is to communicate the Gospel by what we say, by how we live, and by how we relate to others. God wants me to give time, energy, and support to those who prioritize making disciples through proclaiming the Gospel, strengthening local churches, and discipling Christians.

In addition, the Bible emphasizes that God created human beings in his image and has given them an intrinsic worth and dignity. Human life is valuable in God's kingdom purposes and he wants our involvement in both church and society to reflect that value. For me, that means support for efforts among God's people in three vital areas: racial reconciliation, prolife concerns, and efforts to address the worldwide persecution of Christians—a persecution that has seen thousands of people killed simply because they're followers of Jesus Christ.

Where is God working?

We then need to ask, "Where is God at work in our lives, our congregations, our communities, our world—and how does he want us to be part of that work?" I like how Henry Blackaby describes what it means to know God's will. God doesn't provide a blueprint for our lives with all of the major decisions mapped out, according to Rev. Blackaby. Instead, the Bible reveals what God cares about and what he is at work accomplishing in our world. Our task is to discern what God is doing and discover how he wants us to be involved in that. To do that means that we must invest in our own personal relationship with him and be involved in the life of a local church.

One final thing that I try to ask is this: Are

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A Journey to Freedom

God's Liberating Love

Shelley Warner
San Diego, Calif.

IT IS INTERESTING how God uses stress and change to bring about a greater wholeness in certain areas of our personalities. Sometimes we do not even realize that we have a need for emotional healing until God reveals it to us. My story is about how God did that for me.

It was the autumn of 1976 when Tom entered full-time ministry that I began a journey of freedom to discover God's loving acceptance. We were thrilled that fall because the wonderful church we belonged to had invited Tom to come on staff as assistant pastor. I sensed that, here too, was an opportunity for me to be more fully involved in Christian work. In our six years of marriage we'd been unable to have children, and I hadn't chosen a career, partly because I sensed that God had something else for me to do. I didn't know, though, as we happily accepted that position, and as I decided to devote myself to work in whatever capacity I was needed, of the intensive learning experience that I was to encounter.

Sometimes we do not even realize that we have a need for emotional healing until God reveals it to us.

A misconception of God

As the months passed, I began to feel as if God had handed me a life sentence. While I had a deep concern for the work of the church, I was also realizing that I loved the creative aspects of homemaking: gardening, special cooking projects, and crafts. The activities were fulfilling. But how could I waste time making zucchini relish when people were going to hell? As my feelings of guilt increased, I became depressed. "Why can't I be allowed to enjoy creative outlets?" I wondered. It seemed that I had no personal freedom. If I spent time in any activity for my own relaxation and enjoyment, I feared God's displeasure. I increased my ministry involvement hoping to feel more pleasing to God, but the guilt and depression only increased.

I began to have sleeping problems and greater and greater emotional distress. What on earth was happening to me? What was happening was that good stress (the ministry opportunity) and bad stress (some low blood sugar and related health problems) were bringing an emotional and spiritual need to the surface. I'd grown up in a church that taught salvation and emphasized holiness. But the teaching had been strong on our responsibility to live holy lives and weak on God's grace. I'd developed a misconception of God, seeing him more as my judge than my Father. Deep down, I felt that though he had saved me freely, I must earn his favor to remain in a loving relationship with him. Now, in my new role, the climate was perfect for these misconceptions to ripen and spoil my joy.

As is always true with God, he didn't abandon me to these stresses. Rather, he used them to bring about a healing that he knew I needed. Two books came my way: *Celebration of*

Grace by Joseph R. Cooke and *Freedom From Guilt* by Bruce Narramore. As I read these books, the realization of God's liberating love broke into my consciousness. The Word of God assured me that God loves me completely. I do not need to anxiously strive to please him. He is pleased with me because I'm in Christ. And he wants me to experience freedom in him:

- "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1, NASB).
- We are "...accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6, NKJ).
- "For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons [and daughters] by which we cry out *Abba! Father!*" (Romans 8:15, NASB).
- "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1, NKJ).
- "If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36, NASB).

God's liberating love

What a relief to discover the overwhelming and liberating love of God!

The Word of God assured me that God loves me completely. I do not need to anxiously strive to please him.

Now I knew that I need not be a slave to guilty compulsions and deny myself time to enjoy hobbies or just relax. Yet liberty was a little frightening. "What if I go overboard with this freedom thing?" I worried. "What if God has something for me to do and I miss it?" The answer came in God's Word again: "God is always at work in you to make you willing and able to obey his own purpose" (Philippians 2:13 GNB).

God seemed to be asking me, "Can you trust me to lead you into specific paths of service by simply giving you the desire to work on those particular tasks?"

"Yes, Lord, I can." God was releasing me from the bondage of Christian workaholism. I was learning that he accepts me—not on the basis of my service for him—but on the basis of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. These principles of grace would help me in many ways through the following years as a pastor's wife.

I was to learn that not only am I accepted in Christ, but as a child of God, I am uniquely gifted. "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord" (1 Corinthians 12:4-5). Because of this, I am free to say no to ministry involvements that are not suited to my gifts. How freeing this is as a pastor's wife! There is not the compulsion to attempt to be everything to everyone in the church body, for I can depend on God to help me know which ministries he has for me. With this freedom comes a greater enjoyment in serving him!

As I came to understand that God has uniquely created me, I was able to realize that I do not need to fit into a particular preestablished mold as a pastor's wife. In times past, some churches queried a prospective pastor on his Biblical knowledge, preaching ability, and on whether or not his wife could play piano! Churches in today's culture have become less prone to create stereotyped role definitions for the pastor's wife, but even so, a pastor's wife may struggle to live up to expectations that she perceives others to have for her. How freeing it is to know God has a role for me that fits with the personality he has given to me!

God seemed to be asking me, "Can you trust me to lead you into specific paths of service by simply giving you the desire to work on those particular tasks?"

As I learned more of God's love for me, it affected my relationships with other Christians. I became more aware of others' individuality and how God has gifted them. I learned to not build up unrealistic expectations of people's performance in church work, expecting them to commit to tasks that were not suitable for them. I became more able to perceive others' spiritual struggles, and that they also need to know that He loves them and that they are accepted in Christ. I learned the importance of transparency; we are all in process and we can encourage each other. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed" (James 5:16a, KJV).

As I look back to those early struggles, I find it interesting that the creative activities that I felt compelled to give up in order to "serve God" were actually part of the personality that God gave me. He's been able to use my cooking interest to help Tom and me reach out to others by having them in our home for meals. He's used my desire to work at home to give me some quiet time when I've been able to work on writing projects and prepare lessons for teaching. God

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The Forgiveness That Saves

Nikola Simic
Zagreb, Croatia

BECAUSE I was born in a Roman Catholic family, I thought that I knew all about Christianity. During all these past years of my life, I did not know that to be a Christian means more than that. The Christian faith is not simply going to church each Sunday, taking communion, attending youth meetings, or making my formal confession every week.

Since my first contact with the Advent Christians here in Zagreb last year, I realized that something was wrong both with my life and with my beliefs. But my fanatical side did not let me accept that reality. I found the justification for my character in modern views which assert that Christianity must adjust to the society. But Christianity is not a mutable ideology! Something was wrong with me and my beliefs. That was easy to see in the mirror of one spiritual life. The difference was clear between the humility of the Advent Christians I know and my pride, between their generosity and my selfishness, and between their love and my hatred. Their virtue aroused in me a spirit of envy and jealousy until that day on January 19, 1997 when I attended for the first time an Advent Christian church service.

The Advent Christian church service was not the style I was used to. The spiritual aspect of it was so deep that it moved even "hearts of stone." I could sense unity and true love among those present. Each person there had something special to share with others. Every visitor could feel at home. From this moment, I easily admitted that Christianity is not only an ideology, but also a way of life—a combination of faith where theory and practice are the components of its seal. This many do not have today.

That day, January 19, 1997, Pastor Desiré Ahola preached on forgiveness. The Bible text was taken from Matthew 5:33-48. As we were reading Jesus' words, I could see how far I was from being a Christian, a true disciple of Jesus. The commentary of Pastor Ahola's message helped give a new meaning to my Christian faith. The believers of this church impressed me with how they seemed to live out the meaning of Jesus' words. When I considered my life, I realized that I still had a lot to do to be like them. But I had some questions. What about my parents and friends? What will my priest say? I knew their feelings about such matters. But I had to decide who to follow.

> "Let us, therefore, take time to understand one another as well as our environment. By so doing, we shall learn not only from others but also from the master teacher himself." –Pastor Desiré Ahola

Before the end of the service, Rev. Ahola invited the whole assembly to join hands and form a chain of believers. He requested two people from the hall to pray for our enemies, to plead for forgiveness from God for all those who have done wrong to us. After that, Pastor Ahola offered the closing prayer and requested God's guidance during the coming week. This last prayer broke my heart. I felt something passing throughout my whole body and realized that it was the perfect love of God. I realized how much Jesus wanted to use me. But I was a sinner.

During the week, Pastor Ahola's sermon was always ringing in my mind. Each time I tried to do something, I saw my unaccountable sins in front of me. I decided to go to the Pastor for counseling and confession. When I reached his office, Pastor Ahola

and realized that it was the perfect love of God.

was there waiting and cheerfully received me. Surprisingly, he was so simple. He spoke to me as to a friend, and it seemed like we knew each other for many years. I sat with him face-to-face and explained to him all that I wanted. His advice was very logical. He assured me from some Bible passages of the forgiveness that God has given me, passages like 1 John 1:9. He prayed with me before I left his office. I realized that I was free—free from my sins!

As the days went on, the idea of forgiveness was too good for me to believe because there were still some things I had against myself. I could not forgive those men who had destroyed our house, killed my relatives, and taken me into captivity. One month ago, while visiting the ruins of our house, I was beaten up by some Muslims. How could I forgive them? That was the bitter side of my life. I could not wait for Wednesday to attend the prayer meeting. There I presented my problem to Pastor Ahola, and he asked me to put my request in the prayer box. During the prayer time, each request was carefully read, and the whole assembly prayed for them. This was done in combination with Bible reading and singing. At the end of that prayer meeting, the pastor asked me to go home and read the story of Paul and Stephen in the book of Acts.

After reading this, I did not understand. Why did God call Paul after all that he did? Why was Stephen able to forgive those who persecuted him? That was the summary of the sermon I had heard.

The next day, God spoke to me! I was sitting in the park. Children were playing, and on the other side of the park people were walking. One man had his dog loosely chained. The dog was attracted by the ball the children were using, and it started running to get it. The little girl who had just got the ball became afraid of the big dog and started running. The dog followed her. Through the shouting of other children, the dog became disturbed and jumped on the little girl. Then came another man with a stick to rescue the little girl. He hit the dog and broke its front left leg. Suddenly the dog's master came, unaware of what had happened. He saw his dog was being beaten and removed his gun and shot the man who was trying to rescue the little girl from the dog's attack. The man fell down dead. The dog, instead of running to the master with its broken leg, limped over to the dead man and licked his right hand. The response of that dog was very significant. The dog had forgiven the man, but the master showed no mercy. That was how God spoke to me.

When I reported this to Pastor Ahola, he gave me a copy of a sermon he preached earlier this year: "Let us,

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Heard Any Good News Lately?

Lou Going
Windsor, Conn.

I HAD LUNCH with a friend the other day. It was a good experience because we talked about important issues and we did so as friends. There was acceptance and honesty and a sense of being comfortable with each other. Oh yes, there was also our bond in Christ. Much of our conversations centered around Christ; on his value and worth, on his love and grace, and on our struggle to see these sparkling virtues of his person.

I am more and more convinced that my disappointments in life or in daily living arise from my attempt to suck life out of earthly realities. "Set your hearts on things above where Christ is seated." This is how the NIV translates Colossians 3:1. Yet the verse really reads, "Keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated." This is a command to continue to seek the things pertaining to Christ. Those "things" are all the grace and blessing that Christ is for us and gives to us. "Keep seeking" suggests desire, longing, determination, perseverance, and persistence. How are we to do this? With our minds. With what we think, fixate on, and dwell on. The next verse makes this very point, "Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things." There is the tension. Paul knew our tendency to get all caught up with the things of earth. It is hard not to do so. Yet the problem is not that we have earthly possessions or duties to perform. It has to do with our hearts being set on these matters. And they wind up being the focus of our lives. We can hold earthly things without their holding us if we are, by faith, holding on to Jesus.

"The things above" are those gifts and blessings (all from grace) that are indeed ours. They are centered in the person of the exalted Lord Jesus. Our lives as believers are really there. "The things above" are what are eternal. "Christ," says Paul, "is your life." Yet we do not believe this. We do not hold to him by faith and find our souls content. As John Piper writes, the human heart is a desire factory. It produces all kinds of desires and longings that nothing on earth can ever satisfy. Your life as a believer is found in Christ. This means that as a believer your sense of fullness and meaning only comes from faith in Jesus and not from earthly things. May Christ open our eyes more and more to where our life really is and then draw us there. ❑

Lou Going is pastor of Faith Community Church (A.C.) in Windsor, Connecticut.

We can hold earthly things without their holding us if we are, by faith, holding on to Jesus.

Friend or Enemy

Michael Gardner
Ballwin, Missouri

IN MY YEARS as an army chaplain, I was often called upon to conduct funerals for families I did not know. I would in many cases meet the loved ones of a deceased soldier for the first time at the funeral home. I also witnessed grief as a member of the death notification team sent out by the command after an accidental fatality. In these circumstances I could observe genuine grief apart from a normal pastoral relationship, and I found many people had no theological or philosophical basis for coping with the cessation of life. Without a basis for coping, grief was intense and sometimes debilitating.

Americans do not think about death and eternity very much. Those thoughts are pushed aside by the everyday busyness of our society. This seems true also of the American church. It is an uncomfortable subject, to be sure, but we all must face our mortality.

When was the last time you heard a sermon on the consequences of sin? Has it been awhile? In many evangelical circles one is more likely to hear how to attract more people to the faith than the reasons that Christian faith is necessary. In our consumer-oriented society, the pastor dare not speak a word that might offend for fear of losing people. Yet the Bible is specific about issues of life and death. In this first of two articles the realities of death in America and the consequences of our societal ignorance will be discussed. The second article will discuss the consequences of hope, in particular the blessed hope found in Christ Jesus.

Attitude shift

There has been a shift in our basic attitude toward death. The Bible starts out by describing death as a punishment for humanity's disobedience. The apostle Paul views death as an enemy (1 Cor. 15:26) over which we the Christian must achieve victory (1 Cor. 15:57). The shift can be seen most dramatically in the daily news as we still try as a nation to rationalize the millions of aborted babies killed since the Supreme Court's Roe vs. Wade decision in January 1973. Even more alarming is the inability of the courts to stop Dr. Kavorkian from his deadly activities. In the view of this doctor and his supporters, death is a friend not an enemy. Add to this the rise in suicide among young people along with other destructive behaviors such as drug abuse (illegal drug use rose 196% from 1992 to 1996). These trends seem to indicate that death is not feared as an enemy, a completely opposite attitude from what Paul implies. Christians should be asking, "How did we get to such a place?"

The first step is the belief system established by evolutionary theory and eighteenth-century rationalism. The rationalists proclaimed God's irrelevance, or in Friedrich Nietzsche's case, his death. Dr. C. Everett Koop and Rev. Francis Schaeffer in their book, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race*, explain the sequence of events that birthed modern philosophical thought. They predicted in 1979 what we now see in our current society. People hear through evolutionary systems of thought that life exists and ceases to exist by pure chance. The idea that life exists by chance relieves one from any responsibility to a creator. A personal God is completely unnecessary. And taken to its logical end, evolutionary theory asserts that there is no ultimate control over life.

We see this theory and philosophy taught to school children as fact in our nation's public education system. Children are taught that man is the highest development of the life process, and therefore just a more developed and more intelligent animal than a dog. Most Christians resist

The first of two articles on an Advent Christian view of death and dying

this theory, but we are losing the battle.

Twentieth-century technological change also impacts our attitude toward death. The medical community often talks of the human body as a machine. Science museums display human life systems in mechanical displays and terms. Doctors can replace a human heart through a complex mechanical process. A mechanic can replace an oil pump in a car through the same mechanical process (although much less complex). Thus people are led to believe we are simply biochemical machines.

We are able to ward off death in ways that were unthinkable fifteen years ago, resulting in the belief that doctors and hospitals can save us from death if we are sick or injured. The problem with trying to prolong life in the medical community lies in the basic understanding of what human life is. In the short term doctors and hospitals can save lives. But the power to make life and death choices has given the medical community immense power. Doctors can use machines to prolong body function sometimes for an indefinite period. At times their attempts to prolong life can be so dehumanizing that patients or family members wish for death to come because they see no distinction between body and machine. In these circumstances the distinction between life and death can become blurred. However all life dies, and it does so because of sin.

Removing death from our everyday experience

The horror of death is removed from us in modern society. We want to have only good experiences, not traumatic ones. Society delegates the care of a sick person to hospitals and extended-care facilities for the sake of comfort. Doctors do not make house calls because there is not time to care for the sick and travel too. People die in hospitals where friends and loved ones can visit but are not required to care for the dying. One can choose to ignore the reality and leave if the emotion is too intense. Some choose not to visit the terminally ill at all. Visitation brings the fear of pain and death too close to comfortable life styles.

The fact of our mortality is not on the priority list for polite conversation. We have put it away from us into the hands of the medical community and morticians. Not too long ago the elderly were part of the family unit. Grandparents lived at home until they died. Perhaps the Waltons television series best demonstrated how families lived together and shared the grief of mortality together. Now, however, older people are expected to move from their home into a retirement community. The infirmed are put away in nursing homes for the most part until they pass away. The result of these actions deprives children of seeing the progression of life to the end on a daily basis.

Even the church has become part of this trend to remove death from our everyday experience. Most funerals in today's America are in funeral chapels provided by the funeral industry. Seldom does a funeral take place in a church sanctuary. Pastors may or may not preside over a service committing the deceased loved one into the care of almighty God. Traditional Christian symbols are not present in these memorial chapels. The cross can be a great comfort to the bereaved for its emptiness speaks of a risen Lord. Memorial chapels do not have tall spires pointing upward from our earthly home toward an eternal one. Often the music is prerecorded because an organist or soloist is unavailable. In these chapels the life that has passed is not celebrated. Life is not seen as a gift from God. The memorial chapel becomes a convenient place to separate life from death. But the wider that gap grows, the greater the moral crisis within our society will become. Understanding both our human mortality and the reality that life is a gift of God is essential to grasping the value of life.

Americans do not think about death and dying very much. This seems true also of the American church.

However, the grim realities of our culture are not beyond God's redeeming grace. We as Christians have a message of life to give to a world rushing toward painless death. We must promote the value of all human life. There is great value in the unborn embryo, the handicapped, the aged, and the dying. With these we can administer God's grace and mercy. Jesus came to heal not to destroy. He went among the outcasts of society to bring a message of hope. Even lepers could look to him for compassion.

Have we as a culture created hundreds of thousands of lepers of those who are ill, aged, or dying? Our unwillingness to see death in its proper role may raise this possibility. If the terminally ill are placed outside of everyday life, the next step in caring for their needs may be horrifying. The church as Christ's body must begin to reclaim the complete process of life. We cannot afford to ignore compassion and mercy. We must become involved in the lives of the dying. If we do not, the second eternal death will claim more victims than it should.

I think Advent Christians have a unique opportunity to speak to these issues. We give death its biblical role. We have no fantasies of immediate reward. Our hope is based on faith in God almighty who is able to give us a new body at the resurrection. We must be active in bringing this message of hope to a world that has in many ways given up on life. Time is short and our mission is daunting but our God is omnipotent. ❑

Mike Gardner serves as pastor of the Ballwin, Missouri, Advent Christian Church and as regional superintendent for Advent Christian congregations in the central region. Before becoming central region superintendent, he served for ten years as a U.S. Army Chaplain.

Questions and Answers

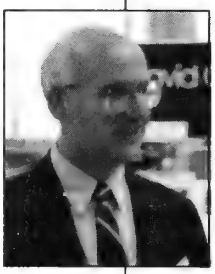
with Edward Fudge

The Real Issue is Jesus and His Sufficiency

The traditional understanding in many churches today is that God sent Jesus to make salvation possible, that Jesus did "God's part" (which did not actually save anybody) by dying and providing a "plan of salvation," and that the gospel offers a potential salvation conditionally to all who will meet the conditions. Some insist that the "conditions" of salvation are repentance, faith, and a decision to "accept Christ;" while others add another condition of being immersed in water in the name of Jesus or the Trinity.

All this would be nice, were it true—but I do not believe it goes nearly far enough.

Closer biblical study will lead, in my opinion, to an understanding that God came to us in Christ to reconcile us to himself, and that he did just that in the personal history (life, death, and resurrection) of Jesus the Messiah (2 Cor. 5:18-21; Col. 1:19-20; Heb. 1:3; 9:12). On the cross, Jesus could cry, "It is finished!" By raising Jesus from death, God said, "It is sufficient" (Isa. 53:11). Jesus was delivered up because of our offenses and raised because of our justification (Rom. 4:25). Indeed, "through the obedience of the One, the many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19). When Jesus went back to heaven, all who will ever be reconciled to God were as reconciled in the eyes of God as they will ever be.



The gospel is not a do-it-yourself-salvation-kit, but is indeed the "good news of your salvation" (Eph. 1:13). God first "saved" us (in the representative life and death of Jesus), then "called us" with the gospel to a holy life in response (2 Tim. 1:9). That order is crucial and critical to understand. In the gospel, we announce a reconciliation already accomplished (2 Cor. 5:19) and we urge an appropriate response from the hearer (2 Cor. 6:1).

Because the work which set us right with God was done by our representative, Jesus Christ, it occurred long before we were born and completely apart from anything in our own personal record of activity. When we first hear of it, it is already accomplished. We cannot add to it, make it better, supplement it, complete it, or improve on it in any way. God saves us for Jesus Christ's sake. He accepted us in the person of his beloved Son.

Indeed, when Jesus died, we died; when he rose, we rose; when he ascended, we ascended—because he was our representative and proxy before God. All that he did, he did in our name and stead (Eph. 2:5-6). This is what it means when Scripture says that Jesus was the "second Adam" or "last Adam." Paul puts it this way, "One died for all, therefore all died" (2 Cor. 5:14).

Jesus did not merely provide a way of salvation; he saved sinners from their sins. He did not make salvation a theoretical possibility; he made an end to sin and put it far away, reconciling sinners to the Father once for all by a perfect atonement that stands forever.

Christ's work is complete

Since the gospel is the good news that God has saved us in Jesus Christ, nothing we do contributes to that saving work, for it is finished before we ever hear of it. But we are called, as was Israel at Sinai, to respond appropriately to the covenant mercies of God our Savior. This response is summed up in the word "faith" or "trust."

Because the work which sets us right with God occurred outside us, we must trust God's promise concerning our reconciliation. We cannot affect that work by our own efforts, either to enhance it or diminish it. We cannot add to it, for it is complete. We cannot substitute anything for it, for nothing else will work. All we can do is trust God with reference to it.

In this fundamental sense (*not* in a sense of "steps of salvation" or superficial professions of "faith") our salvation is by faith alone—we must trust God for it 100 percent. We do not trust God for 50 percent of it and perform 50 percent ourselves; it is not 99 percent God and 1 percent us. It is 100 percent God's accomplishment and we trust him 100 percent. It is "by faith" all the way.

Those who repent and believe the

gospel begin to enjoy its blessings and benefits. The New Testament is chock full of statements to that effect, whether we think of the blessing of life (John 5:24), justification (Rom. 4:5), salvation (Rom. 10:9), remission of sins (Acts 10:43), or the reception of the Holy Spirit and the venue of God's miracles (Gal. 3:5).

Yet Jesus ordains that the person who does believe the gospel express that faith outwardly and step across the line which separates the unbelieving world from the community of faith, the body of Christ, by being baptized in water in his name, or in the name of the one triune God (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 10:48). And, when baptism is an expression of faith, the same blessings which faith enjoys are also associated with that divine ordinance (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16). In short, for biblical writers, baptism serves the purpose which most evangelicals have assigned to the "sinner's prayer," something the New Testament does not specifically mention. If some Christians make too much of baptism, many others minimize its importance. No one has reason to feel self-righteous on the subject.

But the fundamental issue is not baptism. No, it involves the way, at the most basic level, that God saves sinners. Did he accomplish our salvation in the representative doing and dying of Jesus Christ, or did Jesus only make salvation a theoretical possibility which we must complete? *That* is the question. Praise God, the hymns tell the truth, "Jesus paid it *all*!" "Believe, obey, the work is *done*." "When before the throne, I stand in him *complete*..." Jesus "rose victorious in the strife for those he came to save."

Our salvation and reconciliation to God is not some mechanical process, like putting coins in a vending machine. It is not a commercial transaction or a joint venture—part God's effort and part our effort. It is a supernatural deliverance which God did for us while we were helpless, indifferent, even hostile to him. He tells us what he did in the gospel. We either trust it—and enjoy it—or refuse to trust it, and continue on our way to destruction. That is the main point. All else flows from that truth.

An earnest believer in North Carolina asks, "How will God deal with people who profess to be Christians, yet who live in complacency and rebellion, using the Bible to suit their own agendas and using the grace of God as a license to sin against God and other people? And how should we deal with them as believers?"

Note that your question concerns the flagrantly rebellious person. There is a great difference between one who struggles with sin and one who is indifferent to it, as there is also between human weakness and outright rebellion. None of us measures up to God's standards or desires for us—except as God graciously sees us through the merits of Jesus Christ. And the best among us are most conscious of their own wrongs and most sorrowful for them.

Jesus makes plain that mere professions of faith do not a disciple make (Matt. 7:21-23; John 8:31-32). Professing Christians whose conduct shows no evidence of spiritual life deceive themselves (Gal. 6:7-8), have a "dead" faith (James 2:17), and live a lie (1 John 1:6).

A rebellious and haughty spirit is a mark of a false or counterfeit Christian (2 Pet. 2:10), whose end is "destruction" (v. 12). Jude uses his entire one-chapter epistle to warn at length about those who use God's grace as an excuse for immorality (Jude 3-4).

Those who truly belong to Jesus Christ have been born again from above (John 3:7-10). Any professing Christian who chooses a life of willful sin courts a terrible destiny at the hands of God who is a "consuming fire" (Heb. 10:26-27, 31; 12:29). Theologians may debate whether such a one was saved and fell from grace or was never saved in the first place. Responsible teachers of both persuasions agree that the rebellious and immoral person finds no basis of assurance in Scripture while s/he remains unrepentant.

Wise believers will avoid teachers who fit this description (Matt. 7:15-20), and will seek instead godly examples worthy of imitation (Phil. 3:17-21). God is exceedingly merciful to the contrite sinner, but he does not countenance open and unrepentant immorality—and neither should the church (1 Cor. 5:11-13; see 1-12).

None of this should discourage anyone who grieves because of his or her wrongs, who loves Christ and wants to be more like him, who confesses sins to God and claims his forgiveness. No penitent can stumble more often than God can restore. No prodigal ever returns home not to find the Father waiting with open arms. Those are the people whom Jesus came to save—and he is able to save them completely and forever, "by his one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world," to borrow some fine words from the *Book of Common Prayer*.

An old radio preacher once said, "The Bible teaches the security of the believer, but it nowhere teaches the security of the make-believer." I believe he was right. As a church sign board once put it, "Jesus saves sorry sinners." And for that we may all praise God! ❑

Through the Gate

Jane Bezanson
Walnut, Calif.

I WOULD LIKE to take you with me and pass through an imaginary gate into a garden. We'll use the words of the hymn, "In the Garden." Are you ready? Let's go!

It is early morning. I feel a little lost, confused, lonely, and overwhelmed by the many tasks ahead of me. I don't know how I am going to get through the day. I dress, thinking of my inadequacies and past failures. Then I decide that I will slip away while the others are still sleeping and go to the garden. I already feel better as I hurry down the path. I am now excited with the anticipation of passing through the garden gate and of what is awaiting me there.

I come to the garden alone and open the gate. It squeaks slightly, reminding me to oil it next time I come. The dew is still on the roses. I notice a huge spider web outlined with the heavy dew. Its occupant is busy preparing for the new day. The air is fresh and crisp. The birds are greeting the morning with song. I stand silently taking in the beauty of my surroundings and notice the sun beginning to rise in the sky. I begin to pray, "Oh Lord, hallowed be thy name. Give me this day my daily bread and forgive me my debts."

Suddenly I feel a presence. I am not afraid but am eager and glad that I took the time to comb my hair and put on clean and mended clothes. I listen intently as my eyes search in vain to discover what I know is there. Then I hear it. A voice—a voice falling on my ear. It is a powerful and yet quiet voice. It is an awesome voice, a voice I recognize. It is the voice of the Son of God! The voice discloses the *Son of God* here in the garden! Can you imagine! The Son of God, our Savior, our King—meeting *me* in the garden.

I drop to my knees. The grass is damp. I bow my head and mutter, "Oh my Lord, my King." He touches my hand. He speaks, and the sound of his voice is so sweet. He speaks, and the birds hush their singing. He speaks, "Come, come walk with me." I rise and find myself staring into his wonderful face. I am trembling, I am thrilled, my heart is pounding. He walks with me through the garden with my hand in his. The mist is dissolving as the sun climbs higher in the sky. I feel safe. I feel an immense sense of love and well-being. He talks with me and calls me his "beloved child."

The Game of Life: Rook or UNO?

Melodie Dean
DeKalb, Ill.

WHEN MY children were small, I played a lot of table games with them. Some I used as teaching tools, but mainly I played with them so that they would know how to play when the opportunity came to play with others. When playing games, it is important to know the rules. Some games are like Rook and Yatzee, where the person with the most points wins. In other games, like UNO and golf, the person with the fewest points wins. Terrible losses can take place when rules are unknown.

According to our world's system the people with the most toys are the winners. Men and women race frantically in the fast lane to collect all the goodies; benefits, good salary, nice clothes, nice car, nice house, extra electrical gadgets, time and effort-saving devices, and lots of padding for the comfort zone. Even Christians have joined the race. According to the Bible, we are to walk as Jesus walked. He had riches, yet he became poor for us that we might become rich through him. We are to empty ourselves and try to help others find the unsearchable riches of God. We are not to spend our time and effort grasping at and playing with worldly trinkets and toys.

The game of life (the life we are to live) is like UNO, not Rook. He who gains his life shall lose it, but he who loses his life for Christ's sake shall find it. ❑

He tells me I am his own. I am *so* thankful to be a child of *this* king.

We speak of many things together. The time passes, oh so quickly. Too soon it is time to go! But now I am refreshed and at peace. He has given me a melody of life—this melody he gave to me within my *heart* is ringing. I feel rooted in the love of my Lord and King. I am no longer the confused, lonely, and overwhelmed person I was when I arrived. I am loved, forgiven, confident, and enthusiastic. I have direction and purpose.

As I hear the squeak of the garden gate behind me, I feel tears of joy falling on my cheeks; for the joy we shared, as we tarried there, none other has *ever* known. And yet as I walk back up the path, I have an excitement to tell others of this joy. I want to share the wonder of this King. I want to sing, shout, dance, and rejoice before the King and because of the King. Shhhh! I think I hear him calling, "Come Altha, come Joan, come Lyn, come Margaret, come Loretta, come Nelda, come Sherrill, come all. Pass through the gate! You are my beloved child. Come! Whoever is thirsty, let her come; and whoever wishes, let her take the free gift of the water of life."

We *are* his precious children and he is our wonderful Savior and King. Let's meet him each day *in the garden,* in our own special meeting place, wherever that may be. ❑

Jane Bezanson lives in Walnut, Calif., and attends First Advent Christian Church in Tustin, Calif. This article is adapted from a devotional she shared at the February meeting of the Tustin WHFMS. She prepared this to coincide with the 1997 WHFMS Program kit theme—Pass Through the Gates.

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the people involved in a particular issue or cause attempting to accomplish good goals by methods that are ethically questionable or that deny human dignity and worth? As Christians, we must say loud and clear to our celebrity driven, self-centered culture that the ends do not justify the means! That's especially true when it comes to dealing with those who might oppose our ideas and causes. Our opponents are people created in God's image who need to hear the good news that Jesus Christ died for them.

I'm thankful that God's approach is not the issue-of-the-day menu offered by the early editors of *USA Today.* His strategy is much more focused and flexible. In the face of countless requests and demands for our time and attention, God calls us to draw close to him, discover his passion for seeing people become followers of Jesus Christ, and discern his will for how to use the time, abilities, spiritual gifts, and financial resources he has given us. Don't be afraid to ask him to help you grasp and discern what he wants to do in your life, your community, and your world. ❑

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

June

1 Praise God for the opportunity that Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** and Asia/Pacific Area Director **George Teshera** have had to interact with Advent Christian pastors and leaders in India.

2 Pray that God will raise up Advent Christians for missionary service in **India** and **Honduras**.

3 Praise God for the ministry that **Marion Damon** and **Barbara White** have had in India during the past several months.

4 Pray that God will give **Barbara and Marion** a good time of rest and enjoyment as they spend this summer in New England.

5 Praise God for the lives and ministries of our Philippine missionaries: **David Vignali**, and **Jeff and Penny Vann**.

6 Pray for victims of recent flooding on the Philippine Island of **Mindanao**, many of whom are associated with Advent Christian congregations.

7 Praise God for students at **Oro Bible College** who continue their preparation for Christian ministry.

8 Pray that God will provide for the needs of students, faculty, and staff at **Oro Bible College**.

9 Praise God for the commitment of **Floyd and Musa Powers** to serve in Japan on a short-term basis.

10 Pray that God's presence and healing touch will be especially close to **BethAnn Lay** as she continues treatment for a serious illness.

11 Praise God for **twenty-three decisions for Christ** at a three-day crusade led by Pastor **Amos Gbaa** in Ghana.

12 Pray that these new converts will be well discipled in the months to come as they become part of the expanding Advent Christian ministry in **Ghana**.

13 Praise God that three Advent Christian ministry sites have now been established in **Ghana**.

14 Pray for Advent Christians and all followers of Jesus in **Liberia**, as they continue to deal with the consequences of that nation's civil war.

15 Praise God for the opportunities that **Russell and Noelle Carle** and the Takanini, New Zealand, Church of Christ, Life and Advent are having to communicate their ministry to their community through mass mailings.

16 Pray that God will give strength and discernment to **Russell and Noelle** as they continue to seek his leading regarding opportunities to plant churches in unchurched New Zealand communities like Piha.

17 Praise God for the recent wedding of retired Advent Christian missionary **Beryl Joy Hollis** to Mr. Bill Ching in New Zealand.

18 Pray that the Holy Spirit will touch many lives in **New Zealand**, a country where only two to three percent of the population attends church on any given Sunday.

19 Praise God for the continued growth of the four Advent Christian church-planting ministries in **Mexico**.

20 Pray for the work of **Mexican Medical Ministries** as they continue to establish hospitals and clinics in Mexican towns and communities with inadequate health-care facilities.

21 Praise God for several Advent Christian congregations who continue to send **work teams to Mexico** to work with Mexican Medical Ministries and Advent Christian World Missions in that country.

22 Pray that God will guide graduates of **Tecate Bible Institute** as they seek his leading for ministry opportunities in Mexico.

23 Praise God for the growing Advent Christian Hispanic ministry in Arleta, California, as Pastor **Hector Ramirez** continues the work of establishing an Advent Christian congregation in that community.

24 Pray for **Carlos Quintero** as he provides leadership for the Hispanic Advent Christian congregation in Pasadena, California, and serves as field superintendent for Advent Christian missions in Mexico.

25 Praise God for the continued vision for ministry that **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** have for the inner city of Memphis, Tennessee.

26 Pray that God will give strength and direction to **Francis and Lyne** as they provide leadership for Living Water Advent Christian Church in Memphis.

27 Praise God for the good ministry contacts made by Pastor **Johnson Raju** among Asian Indians in Montgomery County, Maryland.

28 Pray that God's leading and direction will be with **Pastor Raju** as he continues to communicate the gospel and works to establish an Advent Christian congregation in this community.

29 Praise God for the sacrificial support that many Advent Christian congregations have made toward **Penny Crusade** this spring.

30 Pray that **your pastor** will know God's presence and strength in a special way today.

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wants to use me just the way I am.

Most interesting of all, I thought God had withheld children from us so that I could devote myself to ministries in the church. But he also gave me the desire of my heart, to be a mother, when Andy arrived from Calcutta, India, in 1982 at the age of five weeks to become our son, and five years later Corina arrived from Calcutta at the age of five months to become our daughter.

God has been so good to show me how to enjoy serving him and to help me find the freedom to be what I'm meant to be. I believe that this is his desire for all Christians. I suggest to any believer struggling with these same issues to ask God to show you answers in his Word. Read good books that teach the grace of God. Keep a journal of all the Scriptures that speak to your need. Read them and re-read them. Do not be discouraged at the return of negative emotions. Emotions come and go, but God's Word can be depended on. I do not believe that I have arrived on this journey to freedom, for God still has to rescue me when old feelings resurface in new ways. But the final answer for me is always the same: God loves me, not because of what I do or what I am but because I am accepted in Christ! ❑

Shelley Warner lives in San Diego, California. She, her husband Tom, and their two children, Andy and Corina, are the pastoral family at North Park Community Advent Christian Church in San Diego.

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therefore, take time to understand one another as well as our environment. By so doing, we shall learn not only from others but also from the master teacher himself. It is the knowledge that comes through such learning that will, by the grace of God, continue to give the Advent Christian Church in Croatia the recognition it cannot afford to lose."

As a man I found it very difficult to forgive my enemies. How long do I need before granting forgiveness? God forgives immediately. Please God, forgive me for not forgiving my enemies. The world needs to see Jesus in every believer. We are to pardon those who treat us unfairly.

Although they do not understand me in my home, I have decided to become a follower of Jesus, and become a member of the Advent Christian family. I know that Jesus is the way to salvation. I have forgiven my enemies. Thanks and glory be to the Lord Jesus. ❑

Nikola Simic attends the Advent Christian congregation in Zagreb, Croatia.

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

Prayer does not fit us for the greater works; prayer is the greater work. We think of prayer as a common-sense exercise of our higher powers in order to prepare us for God's work. In the teaching of Jesus Christ, prayer is the working of the miracle of redemption in me which produces the miracle of redemption in others by the power of God."

—Oswald Chambers

No matter how much effort we invest, [sin] will always remain to some extent unexplainable, because inherent in sin is the denial of truth.

—Becky Pippert

The message God has entrusted to the church is the most revolutionary message the world has ever heard. Should we now surrender that message in favor of mere political and social action? Should we content ourselves with allowing the church to become just another worldly political or social organization? Do we believe God enough to agree with him that it is Christlike love, lived out in the koinonia-community of his church, that will change the world—not political power or social agendas?

—Ray C. Stedman

In Other Words

The hunger is for an all-forgiving God who will commiserate when we do what self-fulfillment requires (cheat spouses, employers, or parents—they shouldn't have gotten in our way). We want to believe that following our hearts' desires will lead us to Candyland. Surely that is what any God worth his name would provide... The biggest challenge to the church will come from within. Hearing the multitudes cry for safety, comfort, and approval, will we be seduced into supplying only that? Will those renegades who persist in speaking of sin and repentance embarrass us until their... voices are silenced? Will the church of the new millennium put a happy face on the cross? It will sell like crazy; no doubt about it. What will it cost?

—Frederica Matthewes-Green

Jesus said, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." Jesus is not the only one in the fishing business. Satan spends much of his time fishing too. Nothing delights Satan more than luring Christians away from the everyday commission. We must always be examining ourselves and asking the question, "Am I the fisherman or the catch of the day?"

—Melodie Dean

Truth and love are meant to work together. Like two sides of the same coin, we can't have one without the other. It is tempting to downplay the truth, fearing it will dampen our love. And it is easy to withhold our love, feeling it may compromise the truth. But God's Word declares that if we speak the truth and have not love, it profits nothing. And to love without truth is deceptive....Once we have learned to use truth and love together, we will have accomplished what might be called the godly art of *true love.*

—Chris Halverson

For the wise men of old, the cardinal problem of human life was how to conform the soul to objective reality, and the solution was wisdom, self-discipline, and virtue. For the modern, the cardinal problem is how to conform reality to the wishes of man, and the solution is the technique.

—C.S. Lewis

Today we live in a world torn as never before along lines of gender, race, socioeconomic standing, ethnicity, and values. If the gospel is being proclaimed authentically, it will be a reconciling rather than a polarizing force, bringing men and women together in Christ rather than dividing them. Christ himself will be the dividing point, nothing else.

—Todd Hahn and David Verhaagen

Sources: Oswald Chambers from *Prayer: A Holy Occupation.* Chris Halverson from *Perspective* (3/10/97). Todd Hahn and David Verhaagen from *Reckless Hope: Understanding and Reaching Baby Busters* (Baker Books, 1996). C.S. Lewis from *The Abolition of Man.* Becky Pippert from *A Heart Like His.* Ray C. Stedman from *Body Life* (Discovery House, 1995). Frederica Matthewes-Green in *Current Thoughts and Trends* (September 1996).

Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
Box 17 Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Marion Damon (March 27)
Box 17 Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Jeff and Penny Vann
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
2114 Prairie Rd.
Aurora, IL 60506

Karen Rigney (June 5)
c/o Emmanuel A.C. Church
P.O. Box 1812
Rochester, NH 03866-1812

New Zealand

Russell and Noelle Carle
(December 30 and December 19)
(Ryan, November 15, 1979)
(Emily, June 23, 1983)
(Peter, August 14, 1991)
11 Rosehill Ave.
Papakura
Auckland 1702
NEW ZEALAND

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
Bududuram Refugee Camp
c/o NMP Box 46
State House
Accra, GHANA

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

China
Our pastor in China
All correspondence should be channelled through the missions office.

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devadason
Beulah Margaret Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Croatia

Desirée Ahola
c/o Advent Christian Croatia Ministry
Bozidar Magovca 44/7 Kat.
Trund 10000 Zagreb
Croatia – Europe

Mexico

Carlos Quintero
387 W. Poppyfields Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
(818) 791-2447

Mario and Elena Cortez
Joel and Omega Garcia
Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Carlos Quintero

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Director
Pomeroy Carter; Planned Giving
Dwight Carpenter; Student Ministries
John Roller; Urban/Ethnic Ministries
George Teshera; Asia/Pacific Director

P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

Harold Patterson; World Missions
Millie Griswold; Resource Development
Russell Giasson; Services
Robert Mayer; Publications
Richard Russell; Church Relations

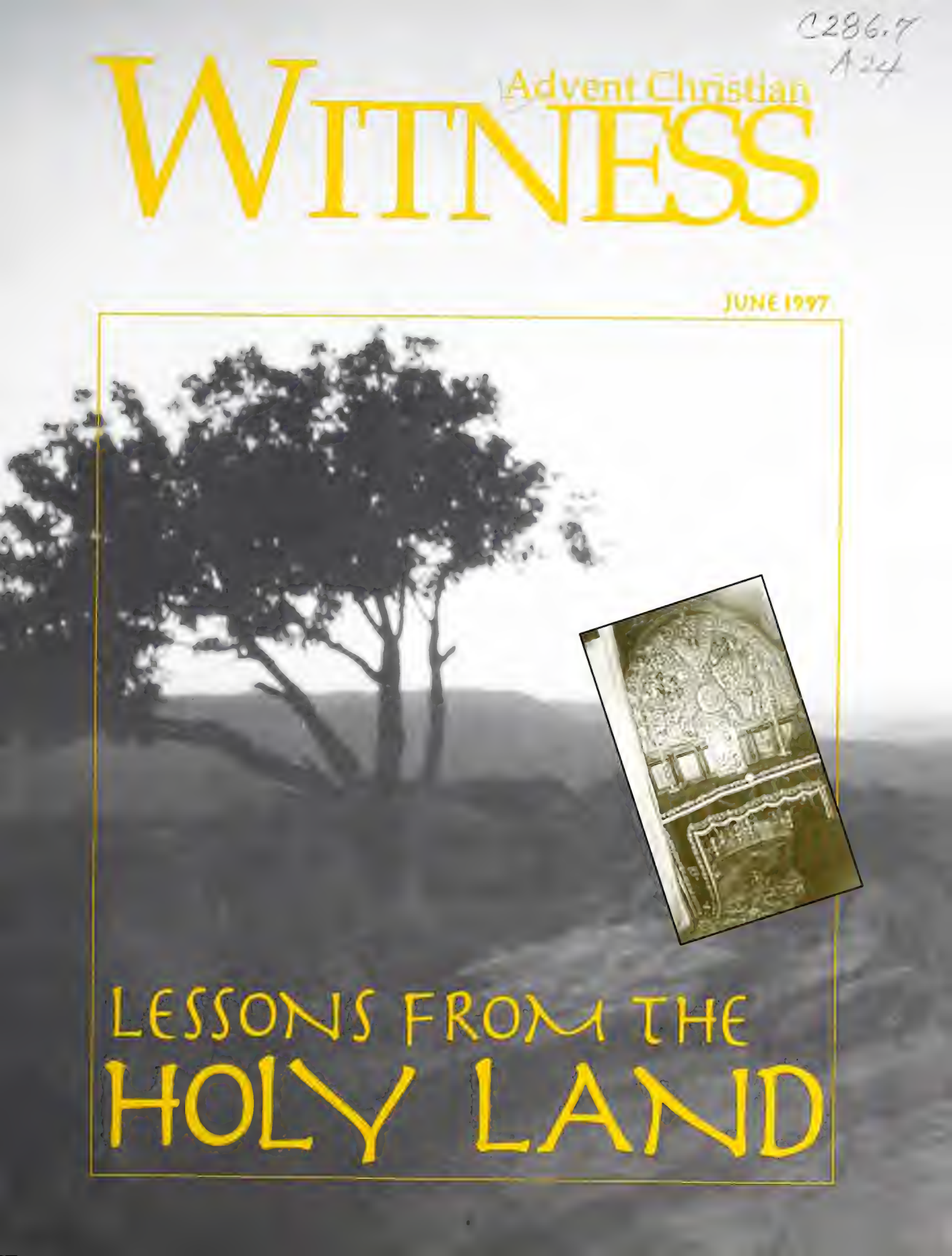
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WITNESS

JUNE 1997



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In this Easter sermon delivered four days after the mass suicide in Rancho Santa Fe, California, Pastor Tom Warner from North Park Community Advent Christian Church in San Diego reminds us that eternal life is found only by faith in the risen Christ.

Missions on the Edge of a New Century 7

Advent Christians attending General Conference last year in Tampa had the opportunity to meet and hear this missionary statement. In this interview, Jim Reapsome reflects on developments in world missions during the 20th century and looks forward to a new century of missionary enterprise.

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For Peri Stone, visiting the Holy Land was not what she expected it to be. "Wasn't I supposed to come away a changed person? As much as I tried to avoid it, I had created false expectations."

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photos by Peri Stone

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Advent Christian WITNESS

Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy**

Typesetter Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria



SILENT NO MORE

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM. We take it for granted in Canada and the United States to the point where our attitude towards religious liberty can become indifferent or nonchalant. And we unconsciously assume that most Christians (and people of other religious faiths) throughout the world enjoy the same freedom to worship and practice their faith that we do.

What would we say to Cuban pastor Orson Vila Santoyo? Pastor Santoyo was arrested on May 24, 1995, and charged with holding "illegal meetings" (church services) in his home. His punishment? A "reduced sentence" of eighteen months in prison.

The list of countries where Christians face legal discrimination, the denial of religious freedom, even imprisonment and death continues to grow.

What would we say to Iranian pastors Mehdi Dibaj and Haik Howsepian-Mehr? Their crimes? Being Christians in the midst of the most radically Islamic country in the world. Their punishment? Murder at the hands of Iran's revolutionary guard.

What would we say to an Advent Christian pastor in China, a pastor who has suffered in prison for his Christian faith and who continues to face the threat of arrest and further imprisonment because of his desire to lead his congregation in a way that is independent of government control?

The persecution of Christians did not stop with the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. If anything, it's become more widespread. China, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Morocco, Mexico, the Philippines, India, North Korea, Sudan, Egypt—the list of countries where Christians face legal discrimination, the denial of religious freedom, even imprisonment and death continues to grow. Christians in Canada and the United States, Advent Christians included, need a reality check. Not only must we stop taking religious freedom for granted, we need to express our concern for and our solidarity with Christians around the world who lack religious liberty and face persecution.

The apostle Paul reminds us how profoundly biblical such concern is. Before coming to Rome to meet the congregation there, the apostle takes money given by Christians in Macedonia and Achaia for the "poor among the saints" in Jerusalem (see Romans 15:23-29). And Paul reminds the Corinthian church that Christians in Macedonia, despite poverty and persecution, gave sacrificially to help Christians in another part of the world who faced great need.

God has blessed Christians in Canada and the United States not only with material abundance but with the freedom to worship and practice our Christian faith. With that freedom comes an important obligation—an obligation to speak on behalf of our fellow Christians who are denied religious freedom and who face imprisonment and persecution simply because they follow Jesus Christ. Here's an important way that you can do that. Mark Sunday, November 17, on your calendar. That's the day set aside by the National Association of Evangelicals and the World Evangelical Fellowship as a day of prayer and concern for the persecuted church. The purpose for this Sunday is simple: to encourage corporate prayer and support for Christians around the world who face opposition and persecution for their faith. Encourage your pastor and your congregation to participate.

One other thing you can do. Normally, I don't use this column to recommend books. This month, I will make an exception. If you want to learn more about the persecution of Christians, let me recommend a valuable resource: *Their Blood Cries Out: The Worldwide Tragedy of Modern Christians Who Are Dying for their Faith* (Word Publishing, 1997). Author Paul Marshall has written a volume that's

continued on page 13

Heaven's Gate? The Risen Christ

Tom Warner
San Diego, Calif.

EARLIER this spring, as Christians throughout the world marked the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we learned of a mass suicide in a San Diego, California, suburb. Pastor Tom Warner from North Park Community Advent Christian Church in San Diego addressed this tragedy in his Easter sermon. Pastor Tom's message not only brings a biblical perspective to this tragedy but affirms the importance of the Gospel of Christ.

MY THEME this morning will not be light hearted. I can get almost giddy thinking about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But I want to speak about how this recent tragedy of which we've heard so much highlights the importance of Jesus' claims and his resurrection.

Rather than calling his followers to commit suicide, Jesus sacrificed himself to give us eternal life!

You're aware of the tragic news: thirty-nine members of the Heaven's Gate cult committed suicide. It has created a strange sort of dissonance for followers of Christ during Holy Week. As we've commemorated Jesus' last supper, death, and resurrection, we've been bombarded with a different message: one of spiritual deception and suicide. The Bible warns about those who will claim to be Christians but who will be led by unholy spirits:

"The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods" (1 Timothy 4:1-3). Such a spiritual deception caused a tragedy here in San Diego this past week.

Thirty-nine members of a group called "Higher Source" (nicknamed Heaven's Gate) committed suicide, believing their deaths would bring them passage aboard a UFO supposedly trailing the Hale-Bopp Comet. They killed themselves with cocktails of vodka and tranquilizers and by putting plastic bags over their heads.

The cult leader, Marshall Applewhite, was among the dead. This son of a Presbyterian pastor had once been a professor of music at a Christian college but lost his position due to a homosexual affair with a student. That affair apparently contributed to his subsequent divorce. Later, he met Lu Nettles, a female nurse, and together they founded a UFO cult in the early 1970s. They claimed, among other things, to be the two witnesses of Revelation 11. Applewhite later called himself "Do." Nettles called herself "Ti." She died in 1985.

Cult members claimed that the end of the world was rapidly approaching, and that the only way people could move into the next world was by abandoning all personal possessions and following the teachings of Applewhite and Nettles. They warned that "Luciferians" (people who don't believe in UFOs and aliens) will be "recycled" or killed when current civilization is "spaded" through natural disaster.

They thought, at one time, that the end of the world would come in January 1994. Last week, their end came by suicide which they thought would bring them salvation.

The cult members were deceived into thinking that the "promised...keys to Heaven's Gate are here again in Ti and Do." How tragic that they chose to listen to a false messiah who led them to their death and refused to listen to the true Messiah and Savior, our Lord Jesus. Rather than calling his followers to commit suicide, Jesus sacrificed himself to give us eternal life! Rather than offering an escapist vision of salvation, his kingdom has come into our lives in the here and now and promises someday to transform this whole creation!

The true gate to salvation

In contrast to their talk about "Heaven's Gate" being some kind of escape in a UFO, Jesus claimed that He was the "gate" to eternal salvation. In John 10, Jesus used the analogy of a sheepfold or sheep pen. In

biblical times a sheepfold was made of a rock wall surrounding a plot of ground, without a roof, with one opening, one gate.

Jesus said, "I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. The thief [the false religious leader, such as Marshall Applewhite] comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep...I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my own know me." And I lay down my life for the sheep.

"I have other sheep [i.e., Gentiles] that do not belong to this fold [this group of Jewish disciples]. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father" (John 10:9-18).

Salvation is not accomplished by escaping from life in this world. It is a miraculous transformation that comes into our lives in the here and now as we receive the life of the Son of God.

Don't think for a minute that these words of Jesus were not controversial! "Again the Jews were divided because of these words. Many of them were saying, 'He has a demon and is out of his mind. Why listen to him?' [Some religious leaders may be possessed by a demon! Marshall Applewhite probably was. But, not Jesus!] Others were saying 'These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?'" (John 10:19-21).

And then Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (John 10:27-29).

Jesus completed his mission

Astounding claims! Can we believe them? Or shall we put them in the same category as the words of Marshall Applewhite? What reasons do we have for believing Jesus? For one thing, he went on to complete his mission! As he promised, he laid down his life by dying for our sins on the cross on Good Friday more than 1900 years ago. Then, he took up his life, by a bodily resurrection, on that first Easter Sunday!

In the New Testament, we have the written eyewitness testimony of those who saw Jesus die and later saw him alive. Those witnesses were so sure of what they saw that they risked their lives by going out to spread the message that Jesus was the "gate" to eternal salvation. They didn't commit suicide, but many of them were killed because of their refusal to stop talking about the Savior. They had no doubt that he had literally conquered death! They saw him, alive from the dead! That created in them a boldness and fearlessness that enabled them to face anything.

Wouldn't it be great to have that kind of faith! I believe we can have it. God can work in our lives a deep conviction that Jesus Christ is alive and that nothing, including death itself, can destroy us. But how? How can we know that Jesus is alive, and is really who he said he was?

There are at least three ways. *First*, as we read or hear the story of Jesus' life and miracles and his death and resurrection, God's Spirit can witness to the truth of it at the deepest level of our consciousness. 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5 tells us how that happened to some people in Thessalonica, Greece, in the first century. The apostle Paul wrote to them as follows: "Brothers and sisters, loved by God, we know that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction."

Think back, Christian friend, about how the gospel, the good news about Jesus, first began to impact your thinking. You were gripped with a conviction that it was true. Deep down inside you were convinced that he was the Son of God and Savior you needed. That conviction was the result of God's powerful Spirit using the truth of Scripture to speak to your heart, mind, and soul. That's one way that we come to know that Jesus is alive, by the self-authenticating power of the message of Christ.

Perhaps you're a skeptic. What's your opinion of Jesus of Nazareth? How do you explain him and his impact on the people of his generation and millions of others down to the present day? Do you agree with those who said, "He has a demon and is out of his mind. Why listen to him?"

I can't help but agree with the others who said, "These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?" I pray that God will create that conviction about the truthfulness of Jesus' claims in your heart.

And if he does, don't feel that you can postpone a decision about Jesus for long! His life and miracles, his teaching and character, his claims about being the divine Son of God—all of these call for a decision on your part!

Seeing Jesus in others

There's a *second* way we can come to know that Jesus is alive: We can meet others who have trusted Jesus Christ and come to feel the sincerity of their faith and their concern for us and hear their witness to how Christ has transformed their lives.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:5, the Apostle Paul goes on to speak of that factor in

the conversion of those first-century Greeks to whom he had preached Christ. He said that one reason people believed the gospel was that, "You know how we lived among you for your sake."

Christian friend, we need to do that for people, especially people whom God seems to be drawing to himself. How I thank God that he seems to be teaching many in our congregation how to do that more effectively.

The message of God's love in Christ will often not be heard until the hearer sees a demonstration of that sacrificial love in us. Thank God for his letting us know that Jesus is alive because we saw his transforming power in someone's life, combined with a sincere love and concern for us.

Young people, I believe you've seen that in the lives of adults in this congregation who've loved you. Do you realize what that means? Do you understand that only the living Christ could make us love you some days!

There's a *third* way that we can come to know that Jesus is alive. We can personally encounter the risen Christ, by faith, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, and find that he is transforming our attitudes, values, and actions.

The story is told about a man who came upon a little boy holding a string which disappeared into the low lying clouds above. The man said, "Little boy, what are you doing?" "I'm flying a kite," the boy replied. "I don't see a kite," the man retorted; "how do you know it's really up there?" The little boy responded, "I know it's up there, because I feel a tug on the string."

Once you pray and ask the Lord Jesus to forgive your sins and to come into your life, he does! Physically, in his resurrected and glorified body, Jesus remains in heaven. But, his Holy Spirit literally comes into you! And, that begins a transformation of your character and behavior that lasts the rest of your life.

You will begin to feel a "tug" from his Spirit that leads you away from some things you used to do that were wrong, and another "tug" which will lead you to do the right things. It will not be irresistible, but it will be so insistent that you will find yourself living a different kind of life. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me." It's not an audible voice they hear. It is the inward call of the Spirit of God, using the Word of God. Those who belong to Christ hear that and follow him! They haven't arrived at perfection, but that is their direction.

Paul wrote of that change in the lives of those Greek converts in 1 Thessalonians 1:6: "You became imitators of us and of the Lord in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit." They were feeling the "tug" of the indwelling Christ! They began to imitate him and his followers.

Transformation, not escape

Do you feel that spiritual "tug" in your life? Don't wait to feel it before you give your life to Christ. That may not happen. Ask him to rescue you from the downward pull of sin and evil which threatens to drag you to eternal death. Ask him to give you his life, eternal life, and to show you the way to live an abundant life here and now.

Salvation is not accomplished by escaping from life in this world. It is a miraculous transformation that comes into our lives in the here and now as we receive the life of the Son of God. That begins a process that continues throughout this life and into the life to come.

You don't have to die to experience Jesus' salvation and eternal life. The Bible says that eternal life begins, in a spiritual sense, the moment we place our faith in Christ. "This is the witness, that God has given us eternal life. And, this life is in his Son. The one who has the Son of God has life" (1 John 5:11-12).

The Heaven's Gate cult members were waiting for a UFO to come and pick them up following their suicide. In contrast, the New Testament says that Christians "eagerly await a Savior from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (Philippians 3:20-21).

Why should we trust Jesus Christ to be able to do that? For one simple reason—because he's already conquered death himself! "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried, and he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

His bloody death brought us pardon for sin. His triumphant resurrection brings us a new power and hope in our lives—a hope that nothing can destroy. Christ is risen! And he will come again to raise us to the fullness of eternal life.

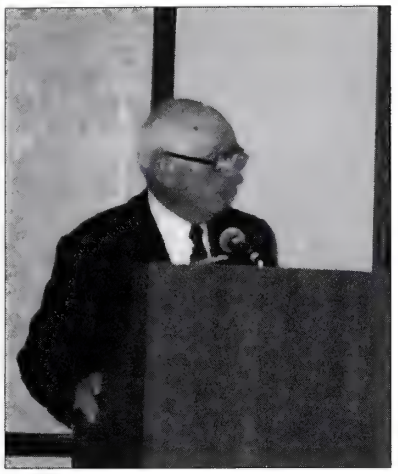
Listen to his words. Let them sink down into your heart. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish" (John 10:27-28).

"For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and trusts in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40).

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me so that you also may be where I am...I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:1-3, 6).

Heaven's Gate is the risen Christ! Put your trust in him. Believe his words. Listen obediently to his voice. Follow him. He won't mislead you. ❑

Tom Warner is pastor of North Park Community Advent Christian Church in San Diego, California. His wife Shelley, helped with the research for this presentation.



An Interview with James Reapsome

MISSIONS ON THE EDGE OF A NEW CENTURY

ONE OF THE highlights of last year's Advent Christian General Conference triennial convention was the banquet honoring the eight Advent Christian missionaries who had given over 300 years of combined missionary service. On that occasion, veteran evangelical missionary statesman Jim Reapsome reminded Advent Christians of the missionary challenges ahead as we face the dawn of a new century.

Several months later, we asked Jim Reapsome to elaborate on the challenges he gave Advent Christians at Tampa. Our student intern, Dawn Rutan, interviewed Rev. Reapsome in his Wheaton, Ill., office.

How did you first sense God's call to mission work?

I was fortunate to grow up in a church that took missions seriously. And in college, in our InterVarsity Christian Fellowship group, we had missionary speakers regularly and missions speakers at our summer training camps in InterVarsity. Also I knew some missionaries personally. I think another strong influence were some people in the church who took an interest in us as students, so that we were involved in planning student missionary weekends as part of our church's missionary conference. I became a Christian as a teenager, and in those formational years to be surrounded by a strong missions-minded church and missions-minded people and getting to know missionaries personally were the main factors that made missions a priority in my life.

I started in missions with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship which is a mission to university students here in this country. Then I became involved in the Urbana student mission conventions and later began to represent InterVarsity at local church mission conferences in this country. Later I was invited to serve on a number of mission boards. So that was how I got my missions experience, by serving on those boards, and then visiting and spending time overseas.

And then 15 years ago, since I was in journalism and also because I had an interest in missions, Evangelical Missions Information Service invited me to become the editor of "Evangelical Missions Quarterly" and "World Pulse."

What would you say are the most significant advancements in mission work in the past 50 years?

I'll go back a bit farther. I think we began to see significant advancements in the 1930s. If you look at the time line of missions developments, missionary radio came on the scene for the first time with Clarence Jones and station HCJV. Bible translation came at that same time with Cameron Townsend and the Wycliffe Bible Translators. There were gospel recordings with Joy Rearhoff. Those things came in the thirties. Then World War II came along and those were put on hold. But you can see how those things have shaped the course of world missions ever since, even though we take them for granted. At the end of WWII, there was a tremendous explosion of hundreds of new agencies and thousands of people going to the field.

Other innovations came along in the early 1950s: Operation Mobilization with George Verwer, later with his gospel ships taking literature into places and doing evangelism. Then Lorne Cunningham and Youth With A Mission came early in the 1960s. At

the same time came Bill Bright's Campus Crusade. Crusade's "Jesus Film" is the most significant evangelistic tool we have. And up to our present time we have the new satellite broadcasting that's covering places in the Middle East that were previously closed. So in a sense we've gone from mission radio in the early thirties to satellite broadcasting in 1996.

And I think another major thrust would be the whole relief and development aspect of missions with the birth of World Vision at the close of the Korean War, and Compassion and World Relief. Also, spinning off of World Vision was Food for the Hungry. I think we've had tremendous progress in dealing with relief, famine, and development. That's a whole new aspect of missions. We did those things before, but not in such a concentrated way. And of course the new technology has helped us with communications, with translation, things like that.

I think another major innovation which came along in the early 1960s was "Theological Education by Extension." That revolutionized the availability of theology to people who could not come into a residence program at a Bible college or seminary. When we started *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, the word "missiology" was not known, there was not such a thing. Now you have missiology offered in all levels, including PhD and in many theological seminaries in the world. So the study of missions has greatly multiplied in the last thirty years.

Another big thing would be short-term missions where easily over a hundred thousand people are involved in two week, two month, and two year short-term experiences. That's greatly changed the face of missions, and that's a fairly recent development. And also, in the last 30 years would be the development of the whole philosophy of approaching closed countries by means of tent-makers. The whole tent-maker phenomenon has expanded because it was the only way we could get into certain countries like China. I would say tent-makers would be right up there at the top of recent developments.

What impact would you say short-term missions has had over all?

It's had a number of interesting spinoffs. One, of course, is that it's given first hand overseas experience to thousands of people. That doesn't mean all these people became missionaries. As a matter of fact, the agencies would be hard pressed for career candidates were it not for short-termers. Anywhere from one-half to three-quarters of career missionaries have had some short-term experience, so you see an influence on the mission agencies. Also, it's a great influence on the local church. People come back and they tend to get more involved in the local church—praying, giving, serving on the missions committee. They tend to impart more missions interest and enthusiasm when they come back.

There's a lot of value for the people who go. They see how other Christians live. They get to know some people overseas. Some have the thrill of leading someone to Christ overseas. There's a lot of personal spiritual value. I think by-and-large missionaries would say that short-term teams are an asset. Although sometimes they're not an asset—they're a drain because they put too much strain on the missionary infrastructure which is not prepared for an infusion of, say, two dozen high school kids coming in. But when it's done right with preparation, coordination, and orientation, it can be an asset to the work on the field.

I've had missionaries tell me that having a team in their town for three weeks accomplished more for them than they could have done by themselves in three years. I'm talking about the kind of teams that would go in and do evangelism, of course. How can you calculate the value of teams that go to do building and planting and digging? That's a whole other value for the mission field.

I heard recently that we live in the first generation that could see the fulfillment of the Great Commission. How would you respond to that?

That depends on what you mean by "fulfillment," and this is a hotly debated subject. Theoretically, by radio and broadcasting everybody could hear about Jesus. But does that mean the Great Commission is fulfilled? The Great Commission seems to be more than just broadcasting—it would include, of course, people coming to Christ, being discipled to obey all things that Jesus commanded us to do, which some of us have yet to arrive at. I think the most optimistic assessment is that we have growing churches all over the world. The growth of the church in non-Western countries is far out-pacing the church in the West in missionary vision, vitality, sacrificing, all those things.

I'd like to say we're making tremendous progress, but the fact of the matter is, there are more unbelievers being born than being born again—we are losing the race if you look at it in sheer terms of population because most of this population growth is in places where there is no existing church, in poor urban areas, Muslim areas, China, and India. It's true we have wonderful churches in China and India, but if you look deeper, and you see the pockets of people who are not yet reached...I wouldn't say this is the first generation that could see the fulfillment of the Great Commission though I'm thankful for great progress that's being made. God is working in amazing ways in many places, but it's outside of our command.

What do you think of the trend toward using national mission-

aries rather than sending people to a foreign country?

Well, it's a healthy trend if it helps those churches overseas develop some missionary vision. It's an unhealthy trend if they become dependent on Western money. So it's a trade-off, and I'm not sure if it's something we've looked at sufficiently. If we say the national missionary is better able to do the job, I'm not sure that's true. In some cases, yes; in some cases, no. It's no criticism of anybody, but you just can't say they're automatically better. Cheaper, sure, but that's not the final criteria. Obviously it costs less than to send an American or Canadian over there. But if all we do is send money, then I think we're just aggravating the situation.

There are too many churches right now that are totally handicapped because they have lived on North American money, which creates all kinds of problems over money, position, power, wealth, and property. It's a sad story really. And so there's a strong movement to say that if we can help, we would like to help, but we want to do it responsibly; we want to do it in a way that the nationals will eventually assume responsibility for what they're doing. I believe the church universal is a body, and I believe we have a responsibility to help one another across national lines. But it's not an "either-or." We thank God for every national missionary there is, but that doesn't mean we close up shop here and stop sending our own people. We need both, and God's using both.

What about the fact that there are other countries sending missionaries to the United States now?

That's a little bit hard to get hold of. I know there's a Nigerian missionary here in Chicago, and he's having a tough time financially as well as making in-roads in the Nigerian community here. I think the American churches are missing a lot of blessing by not partnering with the missionaries from overseas. Around here, we certainly need all the help we can get, because every country in the world is represented here in the United States, but ethnic peoples are a difficult mission field here. It's going to be a long uphill battle until the church in America realizes the mission field is here as well as over there.

But so far, most churches will not support to any significant degree the missionaries working here as opposed to the one who's going overseas. That's part of our psychological and emotional make-up. We haven't turned that corner yet. Thank God for those who have come, and I would like to see stronger partnership between churches here and missionaries who come, particularly in urban areas.

What trends do you see in missions as we move into the next century?

I think a leading trend is going to be more churches sending their own missionaries. I think that's coming fast. I think the churches are strongly advocating that they should be accepted as full partners by the sending agencies. They feel it's been a one-way street—the sending agency comes and asks for money and for missionaries, and it takes over from there. The churches want to have a stronger role in determining who goes, what they do when they get there, how they are evaluated, what kind of pastoral care they get, and they just won't sign a blank check anymore. Not just the big mega-churches, but the little country churches as well.

I believe there will be more and more laypeople entering missions, as second-career missionaries; but increasing financial pressures in the economics of missions as costs continue to escalate means that we'll see fewer career missionaries. That's going to make some financial hardships in some mission agencies. We'll still see more and more short-termers and tentmakers; those roles are becoming very popular with students especially. And early retirees want to get involved in missions.

I think we'll also see increasing hostility in some parts of the world toward Christian missionaries, hostilities that may make missions more difficult. I don't see any pulling back from that kind of opposition. This "prayer for the persecuted church" that evangelicals promoted at the end of September 1996 is the kind of thing we have to keep doing.

We'll see increasing numbers of people studying missiology and writing books. But I think there will have to be some kind of downsizing of the missions base here because the cost of supporting missionaries is exceeding the funds available. I think we'll see a tightening of the belt—it's already happening in some denominational agencies. I think we'll see an increasing proliferation of what I call "Mom and Pop" mission agencies. As long as we have the political freedom to do so, and the economic resources, anybody can start a mission agency, get an IRS tax exemption, and away you go. I think that will increase unless there's a political change in Congress or a change in the tax codes, or some kind of economic depression.

I think we'll continue to see an increasing blurring of the lines theologically. Probably the most scary thing is that our theological foundations are eroding. There's not a clear-cut line anymore between the saved and the lost. Pluralism in America, multiculturalism—all this meshes together so that everybody will be saved some way or another. It doesn't matter if they're mutually exclusive ways. It already shows up in the surveys of our Christian colleges. Probably over half the students don't believe people are lost without Christ. I think there will be a serious theological erosion that could eventually cut the ground out from under missions.

Finally, I think the church in

America will be continually under pressure to do lots of good things other than missions. The agenda for most churches now is so heavily loaded with all kinds of member care: special groups for divorced moms, singles, older people, you name it. These are all good things, but the more stuff that gets on the church's agenda, the greater the risk that missions will get lost or will not have a preeminent place in the church.

What can small groups like the Advent Christian Church do to support the cause of missions?

I really was impressed when I met your missionaries at Tampa at the General Conference meeting. I still talk about that service—that was a great service. I'd say if the Advent Christian Church can keep producing missionaries like those eight who retired—emphasizing quality and not worrying about how many hundred you can get you're doing well. Look for really gifted, talented, sacrificial people who will put their lives on the line just like those people who retired did for 35-40 years. Pray that God the Holy Spirit will initially call young people, and people at any age, to see this as a day of opportunity. See what God wants you to do. That doesn't mean you're all going to go to your mission fields. But whether your denomination keeps missions as a high priority with high visibility will ultimately depend on your pastors, not on your denominational offices.

I've just come back from three mission conferences. In one case the pastor was absent; he took his vacation during the conference. The second, the pastor was present, but he was absent emotionally. At the third, the pastor was there physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They had prayed long before this conference; they prayed every morning for this conference. The chairman of the missions committee was a farmer with 600 acres of corn to harvest who

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Final Analysis
A Flair for Justice

DETECTIVES come and go. Your tastes may range from Dick Tracy to Inspector Clouseau, from Mannix to Sherlock Holmes. But perhaps the most endearing detective of all is not a detective at all. Miss Jane Marple is an old (she does not like to be called elderly) woman who lives in St. Mary Mead, England. She is, of course, the creation of mystery writer Agatha Christie.

Another of Christie's characters, Jason Rafiel, asked Miss Marple to solve a crime because, he said, she had a natural flair for justice. Flair. Now there's a word you don't see much anymore. We used to say people had a flair for business, teaching, writing, or whatever—a natural gift for doing a certain thing.

In the past I have tried to say what it takes to be a successful missionary, but I have never said you must have a flair for the job. Perhaps I should have. The apostle Paul attributes gifted people and their gifts to the Holy Spirit. But that does not mean that a Christian who exercises the gift of helps does not need a flair for helping.

In fact, Paul says the two go together. For example, if your gift is giving, give with all your heart, with flair. If you are a leader, exert yourself to lead with flair. Peter said the same thing. Do you serve? he asked. Then serve in the strength God supplies, that is, with flair.

Of course, missionaries work in more capacities than an octopus has tentacles. They evangelize, teach, administer, drill wells, tend sick bodies, fly aircraft, and mend computers. So it's not much good to say, "Be a missionary with flair." It would be more accurate to say, "Whatever you do, do it with flair."

Mr. Rafiel told Miss Marple she had a flair for justice. Then he quoted the prophet Amos: "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everlasting stream." That set me to wondering. Is justice something like writing, nursing, or evangelizing? No. So how can you have a flair for it? By loving it and doing it.

God loves justice and does it. He requires it of his people, so we should love it and do it, too. I suspect, for example, that if more of God's people showed a flair for justice, they would see more unbelievers attracted to Jesus. Therefore, whatever else they do, all missionaries should have a flair for justice.

Wait a minute! you say with some alarm. That would detract from their ministries to bring people to Christ and build up the church. Not so. Rather than detract, a flair for justice will validate their ministries and authenticate their lives as people coming uniquely from God.

When we love and do what God loves and does, he will convict unbelievers of their injustice and drive them to the cross. The world may not admit it, but it watches closely when the Lord's army advances, not with words alone but with a flair for justice.

"Follow justice and justice alone," Moses told the children of Israel, who were called to be lights to the unbelieving world. God praised Solomon for asking for wisdom to administer justice. The psalmist spoke of Messiah's justice shining like the noonday sun. The great Christmas prophecy of Isaiah tells us that Messiah will establish and uphold justice.

Perhaps the most magnificent declaration of Messiah's missionary calling was uttered by Isaiah and quoted by Matthew. Jesus "will proclaim justice to the nations...(and lead) justice to victory."

Can his missionaries today do anything less? ❑

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Mt. Arbel

THE HOLY LAND'S LESSONS

Peri Stone
Aurora, Ill.

I USED TO equate the phrase "holy land" with the innocent ideals of purity, mystery, and spiritual revelation. My naivete got a taste of cynical reality during a 17-day tour of Israel/Palestine with a group of 22 other students. At times I became overwhelmed with the unholiness evident all around me, especially while in Jerusalem.

In the very same city where Jesus walked and people's lives were transformed, unbelievable piles of trash tumbled into valleys and collected in corners. Israeli soldiers with M-16s slung casually across their chest crawled the streets with watchful eyes—an ominous presence that always made me feel ill at ease. Overly-friendly shopkeepers offered "the best prices" as they tried to usher their potential customers into a crowded space of a store. Even children joined in on the rat race to earn a buck. I was surrounded with poverty, filth, stench, garbage, and depression.

A dark, crowded building

The Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the traditional site of Jesus' crucifixion and burial, was the one place I thought I would find reverence and awe. A part of me hoped to experience something life-changing, whatever that was supposed to mean. Instead, unable to escape my Protestant background, I grew disgusted by the ornate, gaudy icons, struggling to find meaning in what is a source of revelation for so many others. I think a part of me expected the scene to be as I had pictured it when reading the Bible. But there were no dusty paths or rolling hills. Instead there was a dark, crowded building.

More than anything, I was disheartened by the pervading irreverence in the church. A little more than a week before I had wandered through the stillness of the Vatican in Rome. The icons there didn't bother me—instead I was in awe. They drew me in and demanded meditation. Although the Church of the Holy Sepulcher didn't do the same, I tried to take advantage of the opportunity and pray. Unfortunately, I was interrupted by hoards of loud, noisy tourists snapping pictures and pushing to get a better view of the sickly-looking Jesus. They weren't searching for peace, but a better angle so they would have a picture to show off when they returned home.

Other holy sites weren't as loud or disappointing. In Capernaum, the remains of Peter's round stone house were surrounded by the remains of church after church that had been built around the original structure. A church had even been built over his house, its base towering several feet above, casting a shadow over the remains. Building churches over the sites was a typical way to commemorate the historical significance.

A church in Nazareth did a particularly adept job at capturing its history with art. This church, the traditional site of where the Holy Spirit talked to Mary about Jesus, contained murals from countries all over the world depicting Mary. The traditional site of Jesus' birth was also commemorated with a church. His manger was covered with red velvet and cluttered with gold. I found the church interesting, but I couldn't relate to those who fell weeping, smothering the manger with kisses. This became a normal response for me while visiting the sites—appreciating what I saw but never being really moved.



Palestinian refugee camp in Bethlehem

A voice not often heard

The one exception to this was when we visited a Palestinian refugee camp in Bethlehem. As we nestled into one of the modest homes in the camp and tried to swallow shots of Turkish coffee, the father began to tell us his story. His wife and one of his sons stayed close by, eager to have us listen to their story that was so often not heard.

The father had virtually grown up in this camp as had his wife and children. His father had owned much land, but this was taken away in 1948 by Israelis who shot and raped in order to expel the Palestinians. Villages that were overtaken like this were usually destroyed. Thus, even if the family could return to their land, they would find new Jewish communities built over their home.

So, as a young boy, the father was forced to live in this refugee camp where he met his wife and started a family. Although they had a home now, they could show us pictures from 1948 when the hill of less than one square mile was only rocks. They eventually received tents to live in and then buildings. This family was lucky enough to have help from "the outside" so that they could build one of the nicer homes in the camp.

They had suffered other hardships, though. A few years ago, an Israeli soldier killed one of their sons. The soldier used illegal bullets that had been purchased from the United States, according to the father. Another time, the mother had been taken out of their home and beaten by Israeli soldiers for no apparent reason. Such intrusions are common and legal.

There we were in the midst of pain and oppression, disappointment, and confusion. Like the physical setting of the Holy Land, we were right in the middle of it all. But how could the Holy Land be anywhere else, really?

In addition, the family and the entire camp is often without running water and electricity. Many of the children in the camp are forced to drop out of school to work for their family, which perpetuates the problem. No one can get the education they need to get out.

Palestinians have been living like this for 50 years. Those who are not in refugee camps are often restricted in other ways. For instance, Palestinians in places like Ramallah are not allowed into Jerusalem, an important city spiritually, socially, and culturally. Those who are allowed in like my friend Suhail are not permitted into many places—even a bar in the new city. To see all of this first-hand was frightening, especially knowing that the Palestinian voice is often not heard in the United States. These people have no one—the Israelis won't help them, other Arabs have deserted them, and the United States usually sides with Israel.

So although I never had a dramatic emotional response while visiting the many sites, I was heartbroken over the conflict. I struggled the entire trip trying to figure out who was "right." The Palestinians didn't deserve to be oppressed, but some of them have responded violently which isn't right either. The Jews deserve a place where they can have security, but it shouldn't be at the expense of another people. The pros and cons go on and on.

This constant inward questioning as well as the disappointment with some of the holy sites left me feeling bitter. Wasn't I supposed to come away a changed person? A person with more vision, more drive to follow Christ? How could this place be considered holy?

False expectations

As much as I had tried to avoid it, I had created false expectations. But

maybe that wasn't so bad. I was forced to analyze the situation a little more critically in an attempt to understand my trip and its meaning. Jesus doesn't normally work in big magnificent ways. Rather, he often works steadily and subtly. I know that's been true in my life thus far, so I'm not sure why I expected something different when I went to Israel/Palestine. Looking back now, I can see the small ways Jesus was working to change me.

One huge way is how the Bible has come alive for me. I can now visualize the places I read about. I can understand how the Israelites wanted water when they traveled across the Negev. I can picture what Moses saw when God showed him the promised land.

Also, talking to the people we visited gave me a renewed sense of purpose. It wasn't just one person that made a difference, but seeing many different kinds of people—Christians, Jews, and Muslims. They were intent on serving God and would risk their lives to do so. For them, worship was a privilege, not something to whine and complain about, not something to avoid.

God's purpose for me became clear in retrospect. While I was spending a great deal of time worrying about the great revelation I was supposed to be experiencing, God was making a point. There we were in the midst of pain and oppression, disappointment, and confusion. Like the physical setting of the Holy Land, we were right in the middle of it all. But how could the Holy Land be anywhere else really? Jesus calls us to be where the action is, to places where people are hurting, to situations that aren't easy. And I think he meant for this land to symbolize a place where we should all go—a place that calls us out of our comfort zones to be right in the middle, making a difference in our own holy lands. ❑

Peri Stone is a rising senior at North Park College near Chicago and a member of the Aurora, Ill., Advent Christian Church.

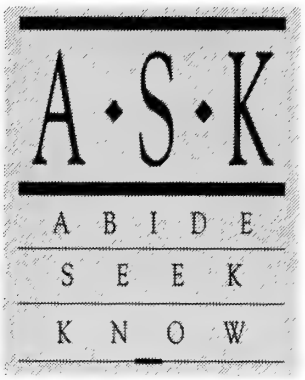
Editorial

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being noticed by people in the American government and in the media. It's a well-written guide to the horrifying lack of religious liberty throughout the world and offers some practical ways that Christians like you and me can make a difference. American Christians, in Marshall's view, must make this issue a priority. "Many of those coming to [America's] shores did so in search of religious freedom.... Turning away from religious persecution would be a betrayal of America's own founding." ❑

Coming in July...
A celebration of the 100th anniversary of WHFMS

Mission Prayer Partnership



July

1 Praise God for the ministry that Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** and Asia/Pacific Area Director **George Teshera** were able to accomplish in India, Malaysia, and New Zealand during May.

2 Pray that God will give continued strength and direction to the **Indian pastors** who attended the pastor's conference led by Rev. Patterson and Rev. Teshera.

3 Praise God for the hundreds of Christian missionary leaders from throughout the world who have gathered in **Pretoria, South Africa**, for a global consultation on world evangelization.

4 Pray that God will give **Rev. Patterson** wisdom and guidance as he represents Advent Christians at this important conference and makes contact with several congregations in South Africa.

5 Praise God for the continued growth of Advent Christian congregations in **India**.

6 Pray for God's provision and leading as Advent Christian World Missions seeks **candidates to serve** our Indian field.

7 Praise God for the partnership that Advent Christian World Missions has developed with a number of conditionalist Christians in **New Zealand**.

8 Pray for **Russell and Noelle Carle** as they pursue and communicate a church-planting vision in New Zealand.

9 Praise God for his protective care for **Connie Vann**, daughter of Philippine missionaries Jeff and Penny Vann, in her recovery from a neck injury.

10 Pray for **Jeff and Penny** as they continue their teaching ministry at Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

11 Praise God for the ministry that Philippine missionary **David Vignali** performs in working with young people who volunteer for service on Teen Missions teams in that country.

12 Pray for **Steven Hughes** in his ministry as the current director of Oro Bible College.

13 Praise God for the interim ministry that **Floyd and Musa Powers** have provided for Advent Christian World Missions in Japan.

14 Pray that God will use Advent Christian congregations and leaders in **Japan** to touch lives for the cause of Jesus Christ in that country.

15 Praise God for the ministry of **Pastor Gell Knight** as he directs the work of the Advent Christian School of Evangelism in Kodaikanal, India.

16 Pray for **BethAnn Lay** as she continues to receive treatment for a serious illness, and for her parents, **Steven and Ann Lay**, as they remain home on furlough to be with their daughter.

17 Praise God for the **growth of the Christian faith** throughout the world.

18 Pray that God will bring **courage, strength, and relief** to the thousands of Christians who face persecution, even death, because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

19 Praise God for the ministry of **your pastor** and ask the Lord to give your pastor wisdom and strength for the many tasks of pastoral ministry.

20 Pray that God will touch the life of **someone you know**—a family member, a friend, a neighbor, or a work associate—who does not know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

21 Praise God for the ministry that **Pastor Desiré Ahola** continues to have in the Croatian capital of Zagreb.

22 Pray that the Lord will provide the right meeting place for the Advent Christian congregation in **Zagreb**.

23 Praise God for the continued ministry and church-planting opportunities that Advent Christians continue to have in the **Baja California** area of Mexico.

24 Pray for our **Mexican national workers** as they communicate the gospel and work to organize congregations in Mexico.

25 Praise God for the ministry of Mexico Field Superintendent **Carlos Quintero** as he provides oversight and direction for Advent Christian missions in Mexico.

26 Pray that God will give **Carlos** strength and wisdom as he combines oversight of our Mexico mission with his pastoral responsibilities in Pasadena, California.

27 Praise God for the many Advent Christian congregations that have experienced record-breaking **Penny Crusades** during 1997.

28 Pray that God will supply the **financial needs** of Advent Christian denominational ministries as congregations participate in Penny Crusade and in the upcoming Day of Labor for the Lord in September.

29 Praise God for the continued growth in several Advent Christian **urban and ethnic congregations** in the United States.

30 Pray for urban / ethnic coordinator **John Roller** as he works to expand the vision for urban and ethnic ministry among Advent Christians in Canada and the United States.

31 Praise God for several Advent Christian congregations who have sent **short-term missionaries** to various fields during the spring and summer seasons.

Missions continued from page 10

prayed with us at 9:00 in the morning. I had the sense as soon as I walked in that here was a church totally engaged in missions, and the missionaries there knew they were loved, supported, and accepted. Why? Because the pastor was leading the charge. That would be the most significant thing I could say to the Advent Christian Church: if your pastors are emotionally and spiritually committed to missions, the flame will keep burning. And the people will sense that. Does he pray for missionaries on Sunday morning, does he really embrace them—make them feel a real partnership with the church, that they are inseparably linked spiritually?

Keep that in front of the young people. This last missions conference I was talking about had programs every night for the youngsters, junior high, and senior high. Everybody was in gear for it. The pastor is the key, and he needs a group of people who say, "We're going to saturate and infiltrate this church from top to bottom with missions passion, interest and enthusiasm. These people are our people and we're going to take care of them." Of course you do need support from headquarters to carry its weight, but if the pastor doesn't feed that into his people and get on board, it's not going to happen. So it doesn't depend on the size of your denomination. It depends on the hearts of your pastors. They have to make the same decisions the rest of us have to make—what priority do we give missions? Pastors have lots of things on their plates that they can do, but if missions isn't at the heart of it, it just won't happen.

What suggestions would you have for young people who want to get involved in missions, but don't know where to go or how to go about it?

I'd talk to every missionary that comes around. Pray. Get to know missionaries. Ask, "Lord, what would you have me to do? Where do I fit?" Seek the Lord's face. Go to the Urbana missions conference if you can, apply to mission agencies, investigate mission agencies. My theory is keep pushing the door, and the Lord will make the path clear. But it doesn't happen in a vacuum, you have to investigate and pray. There's an abundance of information available. One of the great advantages of this generation is short-term missions. You can try out missions and see how the Lord leads you and simply keep bringing it before the Lord. ❑

A Tale of Two Movies

Tony Campolo

THE ACADEMY Awards were painful examples of America's loss of morality and sense of decency. *The English Patient* was the run-away winner of Oscar Night including receiving "Best Picture."

Americans loved this story of a passionate affair between a woman who betrays her decent husband to go off with a man who, in turn, sells out his country and **friends** to Nazis. In theaters across the nation people sat teary-eyed over this "beautiful" tale of love. I thought it was horrible! In fact, it was worse than horrible because its incredible appeal to the senses through color, music, and poetic language made the evil that they did seem good and exceedingly attractive.

For you good folks who did not see the film, the story is set in North Africa during World War II. It involves a woman and man thrown together as participants in an archeological dig in the desert. The woman cheats on her husband (all in good taste, of course) with this despicable man. The word despicable is far too kind for him, because in order to fulfill a promise to get back to his dying adulteress lover, he exchanges crucial maps to Nazis for an airplane. The information he provides the Nazis enables them to win some battles, torture some people, and kill a lot of others. None of that seemed to **matter** to the audience. All that was important was that he get back to his woman who lay waiting in a cave.

As I watched the movie, I could not help but contrast it with the movie *Casablanca.* In that film of a couple of generations ago, Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman rekindle a love from long ago; however, she is now married to one of the leaders of the French Underground who needs her at his side. Realizing that they cannot allow their love for each other to interfere with what is morally right and what is their duty to the nation, Bogart and Bergman make the **painful** decision to part. There is even something a biblical warning pronounced in the parting scene as Bogart tells Bergman that if they do not do the right thing, that she'll be sorry, "Maybe not today. Maybe not tomorrow. But someday. And then for the rest of your life."

Casablanca was made at a different time for a different kind of people. That is what made seeing *The English Patient* win the Academy Award so painful. We're just not that way anymore. And that is a reason for weeping and gnashing of teeth. We have moved away from being a people who honor covenants like marriage and who are willing to **sacrifice** personal gratification for the good of a higher cause.

The irony of all this is that the more we pursue self interests, as romanticized as they may seem to be, the more any sense of gratification in life eludes us. Jesus made it clear that those who seek their own well being and who endeavor to save themselves from the painful sacrifices that goodness requires, end up "losing" themselves. Whatever might be gained in the way of ego affirmation that goes with the kind of romantic fulfillment glorified in *The English Patient* turns out to be a bad deal with the devil. That is because the loss of character that goes with sacrificing others for personal happiness reduces us to creatures who eventually hate ourselves. Contrariwise, Jesus declares that those who are willing to give up the passionate desires that tempt us to betray all that is "of his kingdom" end up being able to live with themselves and experience the peace and joy that go with becoming noble human beings (Matt. 16:25-26).

There are people all over America who are betraying their families, friends, and spiritual convictions to pursue what they believe are "overpowering" romantic liaisons. They do not realize that the price of what they do is the loss of their own souls.

After seeing *The English Patient,* I wondered what the "lovers" would have been like in twenty-five years. Would they still be passionately **committed** to each other? Or would they, by then, hate each other because they hated themselves? Would their lives be radiant with genuine aliveness, or would they be burnt out cases left pathetically alone?

I think we all know the answers to such questions.❑

Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
891 Queen St. #60
Southington, CT 06489

Marion Damon (March 27)
891 Queen St. #60
Southington, CT 06489

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Jeff and Penny Vann
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
2114 Prairie Rd.
Aurora, IL 60506

Karen Rigney (June 5)
c/o Emmanuel A.C. Church
P.O. Box 1812
Rochester, NH 03866-1812

New Zealand

Russell and Noelle Carle
(December 30 and December 19)
(Ryan, November 15, 1979)
(Emily, June 23, 1983)
(Peter, August 14, 1991)
11 Rosehill Ave.
Papakura
Auckland 1702
NEW ZEALAND

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
Bududuram Refugee Camp
c/o NMP Box 46
State House
Accra, GHANA

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

China
Our pastor in China
All correspondence should be channelled through the missions office.

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devadason
Beulah Margaret Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Croatia

Desirée Ahola
c/o Advent Christian Croatia Ministry
Bozidar Magovca 44/7 Kat.
Trund 10000 Zagreb
Croatia – Europe

Mexico

Carlos Quintero
387 W. Poppyfields Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
(818) 791-2447

Mario and Elena Cortez
Joel and Omega Garcia
Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Carlos Quintero

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Director
Pomeroy Carter; Planned Giving
Dwight Carpenter; Student Ministries
John Roller; Urban/Ethnic Ministries
George Teshera; Asia/Pacific Director

P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

Harold Patterson; World Missions
Millie Griswold; Resource Development
Russell Giasson; Services
Robert Mayer; Publications
Richard Russell; Church Relations

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Advent Christian

WITNESS

July/August 1997

100 YEARS of WHFMS







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WHFMS National President Hazel Blackstone challenges Advent Christian women to cultivate a passionate love for Jesus Christ and a hunger for the Scriptures.

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What makes the Advent Christian Church special? Women's Ministries Coordinator Luree Wotton suggests that it's because we've been known as a people who love the Bible. "As we look forward to our next one-hundred years," in Miss Wotton's words, "I want to challenge Advent Christian women to renew this commitment."

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Volume 45, Number 6

Advent Christian WITNESS

Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy**

Proofreader **Shirley Brooks**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria

GUEST EDITORIAL: Hazel Blackstone



Personal WHFMS Snapshots
A President Reflects...

AS WITH ANY centennial celebration, thoughts turn back to review the passage of years. So I allow myself to reflect upon the influence that WHFMS has had in my life. A series of snapshots fill my mind.

Some of my earliest impressions are memories of weekly King's Jewels meetings in the Dulin's Grove Church in Charlotte, N.C. As a pastor's kid I was a regular attender. I felt proud when I was finally promoted into the Milow Club. There, challenged to memorize the missionaries from each of the five fields, we were grilled each week until it happened. Another snapshot from the past finds me sitting enthralled in the youth building as one visiting missionary held us spellbound with stories of Filipino life. A picture comes to mind, too, of a Japanese sukiyaki meal. To authenticate the occasion we slipped off our shoes at the door and ate a raw egg on our sukiyaki. (Time will never erase that memory!)

The next shot in my mind's slide show takes me to Adria Church in North Tazewell, Va. My mother organized a YWA society there and we were an active group. Besides financial support of missions we enjoyed fun times together rolling bandages and cutting up Christmas cards for our missionaries to recycle. Personal satisfaction came from knowing our contributions, however minimal, mattered. We shared the book, *China Adventure* and relived the experiences of Bertha Cassidy. It was of particular interest to me when I found out that my parents had planned to be missionaries to China before its doors closed. (With the recent revelation of what has happened in that country during that period of time, I guess the Lord knew what he was doing!) And under my watchful eye my mother served on the national board and later as National King's Jewels superintendent.

Our home housed many visiting missionaries and this exposure on a more personal level enriched my life. I still have a doll handmade by Frances Toothe. A smile crosses my face as I recall the night my three-year-old brother, Philip, bounded down the sidewalk yelling, "Mary! Mary!" (We were taught not to address adults by their first name.) He wanted Mary Brown to share his delight in the discovery of a frog!

The scenery in the next photo changes to Berkshire Christian College where I joined the Student Mission Fellowship. To renew interest in missions, dorm parent/student Dick Webb decided we should raise support for a club member to visit and work on a missions compound. I became that member and found myself in Haiti during Winterim my senior year. To paraphrase Oliver Wendell Holmes, "A mind stretched by [exposure to another culture] never goes back to its original dimensions." This proved to be true of my visit to Haiti and twenty years later when our WHFMS Board ventured into Mexico.

My adult years are a pictorial collage of WHFMS activities around the country. As pastor's wife I've been blessed to be a part of several WHFM societies. Each has left an impression upon me. Berea Church in Smoaks, S.C., mentored this

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Editor's Note

IN THIS ISSUE, we celebrate the centennial of an organization whose impact on the Advent Christian Church has been dramatic. On July 31, 1897, Sarah K. Taylor organized the first Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society at Friendship, Maine, Advent Church. Her vision was to see Advent Christian women actively involved in world missions, both through participation in missionary service and through active support of missionaries. One-hundred years later, that vision is still vital. People will be lost for eternity unless they come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The gospel still needs proclamation and disciples need to be made for Jesus Christ both in North America and throughout the world.

It's my privilege to welcome Hazel Blackstone to the editor's page this issue. Hazel serves as national WHFMS president and her contributions to this anniversary issue include not only the editorial but an important article on her vision for the future of this vital organization. A special "thank-you" to Mrs. Barbara Schaeffner for helping to compile much of the material for this issue.

I have a dream for WHFMS

Hazel Blackstone
Bangor, Maine

A COUPLE OF decades ago Martin Luther King delivered and made famous the "I have a dream" speech. He dared to express to a divided world the need for racial harmony and equality. Gary Bauer recently wrote a small book about his vision for America and with nostalgia recalls the days of yesteryear when life was simpler, when America had a moral fiber as its backbone. His vision desires a better tomorrow for our children. I've been asked to share my vision for the WHFMS. I can't compete with the eloquence of these men. But I have thought and prepared for this task by asking God, "What is your dream for the WHFMS?" That reflection and search of the Scriptures yielded a vision for the WHFMS. This is my "I have a dream" list.

I have a dream of a WHFMS where women are passionately in love with their Savior and thirst after God's Word—women who are like David, known as having hearts for God. "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:1-2).

Dan Millman tells the following story. "Soon after her brother was born, little Sachi began to ask her parents to leave her alone with the new baby. They worried that like most four-year-olds, she might feel jealous and want to hit or shake him, so they said no. But she showed no signs of jealousy. She treated the baby with kindness and her pleas to be left alone with him became more urgent. They decided to allow it.

Elated, she went into the baby's room and shut the door, but it opened a crack—enough for her curious parents to peek in and listen. They saw little Sachi walk quietly up to her baby brother, put her face close to his and say quietly, 'Baby, tell me what God feels like. I'm starting to forget.'" While busy with our particular ministries let's not forget what God feels like.

I have a dream of an organization where of foremost importance, ladies concentrate on developing the mind of Christ. "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2: 5-11). God is more concerned with who we are (our character) than where we minister.

I have a dream of a band of women

It has been a privilege to review our heritage, the past, to live the present and vision with enthusiasm the future, celebrating one hundred years of service in the Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Societies of the Advent Christian Church—serving Jesus Christ at home and abroad through the "Network of Global Missions."

Let us: "Thank the Lord! Praise the Lord! Tell the world about His wondrous love... Make known His praise, around the world" (Isa 12: 4 - 5, TLB).

A thank you to each one that has been a part of this edition of the *Witness*. May each one who reads the celebration issue say with the song writer—"We'll Work Till Jesus Comes."

Maranatha—Thy Kingdom Come.

—Barbara Gedney Schaeffner

prayer warriors on their knees seeking the throne on behalf of each other, their families, their leaders, and their missionaries. "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

In 1973, Mother Teresa challenged those who attended the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions in Milan. "Let each of us do our part. You use your feet, and I'll use my knees. While you are walking, I'll be praying for your footsteps." The same partnership can be formed between the WHFMS and our missionaries. While they use their feet, we can use our knees.

I have a dream of women mentoring women especially those who are younger and need the support, encouragement, and wise counsel that only years of experience can provide. "Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God" (Titus 2:3-5).

I HAVE A DREAM of ladies so moved with compassion by the plight of humanity that they have a burning zeal for all to hear the gospel and have opportunity to come to a saving knowledge of Christ. "*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*" (Matt. 28:19).

Jack Canfield tells of a friend who was walking down a deserted Mexican beach at sunset. As he walked along, he began to see another man in the distance. As he grew nearer, he noticed that the local native kept leaning down, picking something up and throwing it out into the water. Time and again he kept hurling things out into the ocean.

As the friend approached even closer, he noticed that the man was picking up starfish that had been washed up on the beach and, one at a time, he was throwing them back into the water.

The friend was puzzled. He approached the man and said, "Good evening, friend. I was wondering what you are doing."

"I'm throwing these starfish back into the ocean. You see, it's low tide right now and all of these starfish have been washed up onto the shore. If I don't throw them back into the sea, they'll die up here from lack of oxygen."

"I understand," the friend replied, "but there must be thousands of starfish on this beach. You can't possibly get to all of them. There are simply too many. And don't you realize this is probably happening on hundreds of beaches all up and down this coast. Can't you see that you can't possibly make a difference?"

The local native smiled, bent down and picked up yet another starfish, and as he threw it back into the sea, he replied, "Made a difference to that one!"

We, too, can make a difference, one person at a time.

I have a dream of women who first tithe of their time, talents, and financial resources to their local churches, then give above in support of the work of home and foreign missions. "She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy" (Proverbs 31:20).

In an interview Mother Teresa once told of an American journalist who was watching her care for a man with gangrene. "The journalist told me, 'I wouldn't do that for a million dollars.'

"Even I wouldn't do it for that amount,' I answered. 'However, I do it out of love for God. This poor, suffering man represents the body of Christ for me.' "

What a fitting example of Proverbs 31:20 she is.

I have a dream where women in local churches develop servant hearts and work as a team with their pastors by supporting, encouraging and praying for them. "Now we ask you, {sisters} to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work" (1 Thess. 5:12). A positive relationship with pastors is a must. Pettiness and control issues only create a cancer that erodes the effectiveness of pastors and women in doing God's work. We must be on guard and not allow that to happen. Let's be women who seek to serve one another.

Martin Luther King once said, "Everyone can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You



Barbara Schaeffner and Joanne Thompson

In 1987, Barbara Schaeffner and Joanne Thompson cut the cake for the fortieth anniversary celebration of the Eastern Region WHFMS held in conjunction with their annual convention in Alton Bay, N.H.



WHFMS National Board

Members of the WHFMS national board enjoy a light-hearted moment with Women's Ministries Coordinator Luree Wotton (at far right).

don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

I have a dream of women from the Appalachian, Central, Eastern, Southern and Western Regions who, though diverse in may ways, accept each other's differences graciously and allow each society to minister in a way that best fits its personality and mission. "A kindhearted woman gains respect" (Proverbs 11:16). "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like the stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life" (Phil. 2:14-16). "I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel" (Phil. 4:2-3).

Paul writes about two women who had been workers for Christ in the Philippian church. Their broken relationship was no small matter, because many had become believers through their efforts. It is possible to believe in Christ, work hard for his kingdom, and yet have broken relationships with others who are committed to the same cause. But we must reconcile! For our sake and the watching world we must reconcile.

Finally, I have a dream of women whose ministries focus on things of eternal value, women with a heart for God and intent on developing the mind of Christ and laying down issues of power, rights, and personal agendas to invest their energy in Kingdom issues. Politics doesn't belong in the church. "She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue" (Proverbs 31:26). "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interest, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4).

Two monks on a pilgrimage came to the ford of a river. There they saw a girl dressed in all her finery, obviously not knowing what to do since the river was high, and she did not want to spoil her clothes. Without more ado, one of the monks took her on his back, carried her across, and put her down on dry ground on the other side.

Then the monks continued on their way. But the other monk after an hour started complaining, "Surely it is not right to touch a woman; it is against the commandments to have close contact with women. How could you go against the rules of monks?"

The monk who had carried the girl walked along silently, but finally he remarked, "I set her down by the river an hour ago, why are you still carrying her?"

Sound familiar? It wastes valuable time and people energy.

Do my dreams include goals to expand and do bigger and grander programming? No. Plans to double the membership of WHFMS? No. Ways to increase our giving to missions by a certain percentage? No. A thrust to encourage more honor societies? No. My dreams, and I hope yours, come from the pages of Scripture and begin with each of us.

The following words were written on the tomb of an Anglican Bishop (1100 A.D.) in the crypts of Westminster Abbey:

"When I was young and free and my imagination had no limits, I dreamed of changing the world. As I grew older and wiser, I discovered the world would not change, so I shortened my sights somewhat and decided to change only my country.

"But it, too, seemed immovable."

"As I grew into my twilight years, in one last desperate attempt, I settled for changing only my family, those closest to me, but alas, they would have none of it.

"And now as I lie on my deathbed, I suddenly realize: *If I had only changed myself first,* then by example I would have changed my family.

"From their inspiration and encouragement, I would then have been able to better my country and, who knows, I may have even changed the world."

I invite you to join me in dreaming and envisioning a WHFMS that changes the world by starting first with the changes which begin with us. ❑

Hazel Blackstone serves as National WHFMS President. She and her husband, Pastor Clayton Blackstone, serve the Bangor, Maine, Advent Christian Church.

Questions and Answers
with Edward Fudge

A brother in the Midwest USA asks whether I think church "boards" should include only elders and deacons, or also chairpersons and ministry leaders. Elders and deacons only, in his church, would mean an all-male board. He prefers that because he believes it's "God's will that men should run the church," and because he thinks "men are more capable of making the decisions without getting too cluttered with our emotions."

Since the Bible does not specifically mention church boards, I cannot biblically define proper board membership. The Jerusalem church seemed to structure itself after the Jewish pattern, with twelve primary leaders (apostles rather than patriarchs), and seniors ("elders") to advise, mentor and model. That first church also had inclusive congregational meetings, apparently without respect to gender (Acts 6:2-6; 12:12; 15:4, 22). Gentile churches probably adapted organizational ideas from their cultures as well. ("*Ekklesia*," the Greek word translated "church," was the term used for town-meetings throughout the Graeco-Roman world.)



But may women help to "run the church"? I suspect that Jesus and his apostles would be more concerned about our notions of "running" things than with the gender of those who do it. The Lord himself insisted that in his kingdom, true leaders would be the greatest servants (Mark 10:42-45). Everyone knows that women do most of the work in many churches. Peter also stresses that leadership does not mean authoritarian power (I Peter 5:1-4).

The credentials of Christian leaders are commitment to Christ, giftedness by God, and empowerment by the Spirit of the risen Jesus (Acts 6:2-3; Rom. 12:6-8; I Cor. 12:4-12; I Peter 4:10-11). Those so described in Scripture certainly include women - as deacons (Rom. 16:1-2, see I Tim. 3:11; I Tim. 5:9-10), gospel workers (Rom. 16:6, 8, 12), prophets (Acts 2:16-18; 21:8-9, I Cor. 11:5), teachers (Acts 18:24-26; Rom. 16:3) and even apostles in some secondary sense (Junia, in Rom. 16:7).

Your final comments seem to assume that decisions are best made by pure intellect, that emotions tend to "clutter" the process, and that men may be trusted to exercise the first while women are prone to lean on the latter. The scientific data I have seen suggest that most women do have intuitive perception far exceeding most males. Unlike us men, they can detect, combine and analyze multiple rational and emotional stimuli instantly, accurately and simultaneously. Rather than constituting a defect or weakness, however, that qualifies women to supplement and complete our own limited gifts and abilities (Genesis 2:18). Since we are called to love God with all our heart, soul and mind (Matthew 22:37), I propose that decision-making of the highest sort takes each of those aspects into careful account.

Paul's command in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 for certain women to "be silent" was aimed at the rambunctious, and he says the very same thing to rowdy and disorderly men (I Cor. 14:28, 30). His comment to Timothy about women not "exercising authority" is the only one of its kind in Scripture, and it must somehow be understood in a manner consistent with the general principle set out in Galatians 3:28 and with all the details Scripture provides elsewhere about women in Christian service.

A church planter, Bible teacher, and elder in the Northwest writes, "I was reading the June 16, 1997, issue of *Christianity Today* and found a well-argued article by Jerry Walls of Asbury Seminary titled 'Can We Be Good Without Hell?' The author concludes, 'We cannot be moral without God, and we cannot have God without hell. Hell needs to make a comeback.' Given your writings on this topic, would you care to comment on this article?"

I say "Bravo!" to Professor Walls for reminding us that we are creatures accountable to our Creator, that earthly actions have consequences beyond this age of time and space, and that there is a dark side to divine justice as well as eternal reward.

We should also remember, however, that love of God is far greater incentive than fear of hell - although that has its place for those whose spiritual hides are too thick and insensitive to respond to nobler motivations. The New Testament certainly warns against hell, and Jesus himself says more about it than anyone else. Yet fear of punishment is not the driving force behind most scriptural exhortations to godliness or abstinence from evil.

I also agree with Brother Walls

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Women of the Word

Luree Wotton
Dowling Park, Fla.

THIS YEAR, we celebrate one-hundred years of WHFMS, and for me that makes it a special year. As I have thought about this, I tried to remember what has made Advent Christians special as a people. My study of the Advent Christian Church showed that one of the main factors in our early development was that we were known for being a people of the Word. Our early leaders were students of the Bible. As we look forward to our next one-hundred years (if the Lord does not return before then) I want to challenge you to renew this commitment. I believe that if we take this seriously we will become what God wants us to be.

Because the WHFMS is the major organization of Advent Christian women, I have chosen to use those initials to help us all remember how we can become women of the Word.

W stands for *wanting* to know the Word. It's easy for us to say that we want to know and obey the Scriptures, but how much time do we give to it? When we are hungry, we look for something to eat. When we are thirsty, we look for fluids. How hungry are we for God's Word? How much time do we devote to it? The Old Testament writers frequently wrote of their thirst for God and his Word. Let me quote one passage found in Psalm 42:1-2, "As the deer pants for the streams of water, so I long for you, O God. I thirst for God, the living God. When can I come and stand before him?" Jesus spoke of this in John 7:37 when He said, "If you are thirsty, come to me." If you do not have this thirst for God's Word, join me in asking that God will increase this thirst. This is a prayer that he will honor. We must want to know him and his Word.

H is for *heeding*. What does it mean to heed? It means to obey. God did not give us the Bible just so that we could have some interesting reading. It is fascinating reading, but it is given to us for a greater purpose. It was given for our good, for our guidance. It is so easy to read right over what it says. We become frustrated when people—children, students, friends, family—do not heed our guidance. Imagine how God must feel! He has given us his Word for our good. We need to get into the Bible in our devotional times, as well as at church and Sunday school. We need to listen and then apply the lessons we learn. The Bible is full of passages that stress the importance of applying its truth to our lives. Look at these two. Jesus said in John 14:15, "If



Hazel Blackstone Honors Warriners

National WHFMS President Hazel Blackston (with microphone) presents retired Adven Christian missionaries Austin and Dorothy Warriner with a gift honoring their mission ary service. WHFMS payed special tribute t each of the eight Advent Christian mission aries who were honored at the 1996 Adven Christian General Conference convention i Tampa, Fla.

you love me, obey my commandments." James elaborated on this in James 1:22, "And remember, it is a message to obey, not just to listen to." Remember that God loves you and wants only good for you. He has given his Word for our guidance, so we must heed what it says and ask him to help us be obedient to his plan for us.

F is for *focus* on the Word. What does it mean to focus on the Scriptures? It means that we need to do more than read it. We must study and meditate on it. We must be able to understand and defend the Word of God. Focusing on God's Word means that we will delve into it. Some of this will happen at your place of worship, but some should be done at home or in small groups. We need to study in order to be sure that what we are being taught is the truth. Many of the errors that come are the result of others not studying and then correcting these problems. Jesus told the Sadducees in Matthew 22:29, "Your problem is that you don't know the Scriptures, and you don't know the power of God." In Acts 17:11 we read, "The people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to check up on Paul and Silas, to see if they were really teaching the truth." As we study the Scriptures for ourselves we can know more surely what God is saying to us as individuals and as a group. Ask God to open your mind to a deeper study of his Word.

M is for *memorizing*. Most of us did this when we were young and much of what was stored in our memories is still there. Somehow, most of us have stopped doing this. We blame our brains, the numerous Bible versions, and lack of time. Perhaps it will take us longer now, but we still need to store up God's Word in our hearts and minds. We will never know when we will need to rely on this. The most familiar passage about memorization is found in Psalm 119:11; "I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." The apostle Paul writes, "Let the words of Christ, in all their richness, live in your hearts and make you wise" (Colossians 3:16). Please join me in trying to put more of God's Word into our hearts.

S is for *sharing* the Word. This idea of sharing what God has done for us is something we say we want to do, but we often do not know how. Formal sharing is easier for some of us, as we preach or teach. But there are the informal times that plague us all. We know that we should speak up and share what God has said about a particular topic or issue, but we don't do it. I believe that if we take time to read and study Scripture with the steps already mentioned, this will come. Paul wrote to Timothy about this: "You have heard me teach many things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Teach these great truths to trustworthy people who are able to pass them on to others," (2 Timothy 2:2). And Jesus gave all of us a commission in Matthew 28:19-20. "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this. I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

In summary, let us Want, Heed, Focus on, Memorize and Share the Word of God. Then we will truly be women of the Word. ❑

Luree Wotton served as an Advent Christian missionary to the Philippines for nearly twenty years. She now serves as coordinator for women's ministries for Advent Christian General Conference and lives in Dowling Park, Fla.



Missionaries at Tampa

Veteran Advent Christian missionaries Barbara White (India), Margaret Helms (Philippines), and Beryl Joy Hollis (India) at the 1996 Advent Christian General Conference convention in Tampa. World missions has always been a vital part of WHFMS. For over 50 years, WHFMS provided support, recruitment, and direction of Advent Christian mission work in India. Today through Christmas in October and through other efforts, WHFMS continues to support the work of reaching lost men and women throughout the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

From the Beginning

A brief historical sketch of one-hundred years of WHFMS ministry and service

JUST OVER a century ago, Sarah K. Taylor was invited to participate in an interdenominational meeting of Christian women in Rockland, Maine. Women from each congregation in the community were invited and each denomination had a representative on the platform. At the meeting, each representative was asked to report on the women's work of her denomination and because "Advent Christian" was first in alphabetical order, Mrs. Taylor was asked to give the first report.

Mrs. Taylor was at a loss as to what to say, for at that time the Advent Christian Church had no official women's organization or unified program of activity. From her viewpoint, there seemed little to say concerning Advent Christian women as a whole. But she saw an opportunity to challenge the women of her church and her denomination. "I have nothing to report at this time," Mrs. Taylor told the group. "But one year from now, if you will call on me again, I will have something to report."

Sending the gospel throughout the world

As soon as she returned from Rockland, Mrs. Taylor began at once to plan for organizing the women of the Advent Christian Church. On July 31, 1896, she gathered four women (and two men) at Friendship, Maine, Advent Christian Church for what would be the first meeting of Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society. By the end of 1897, membership had increased to over 300 women representing Advent Christian congregations in fifteen states and three Canadian provinces.

In order to coordinate their work, the founders of WHFMS decided that the best strategy would be to organize Advent Christian women into local societies. Defining the organization strictly in terms of individual membership could lead to lack of unity and lack of support for the work of the local church. That strategy worked well and, by 1899, WHFMS membership had doubled to over six-hundred members.

Early on, this new organization of Advent Christian women defined its purpose in a way that stressed the importance of the Great Commission. WHFMS existed, according to an early edition of the by-laws, "to engage and unite the efforts of the Christian women of the Advent Christian Denomination in sending the Gospel of the Kingdom throughout the world, the deepening of the spiritual life among believers in Christ, and by organization to render more efficient the work of the women of our churches." For the Advent Christian women who organized WHFMS, that statement of purpose was not mere words on paper. In 1898, a year after organizing, WHFMS took over support of a school in India and two years later, the society assumed responsibility for the care of one-hundred orphans in that country. By 1906, all Advent Christian mission work in India had been placed under the guidance and care of WHFMS.

India field expansion

For Advent Christians, India was their first established mission field outside of Canada and the United States. In 1881, the American Advent Mission Society, under the leadership of F.L. Piper had sent hundreds of Advent Christian booklets and tracts to people throughout the English-speaking world. One of those booklets was read by Captain James L. Spence, a British army officer stationed in India. Captain Spence became convinced that the doctrine of Conditional Immortality was the best explanation of what the Scriptures taught regarding the destiny of those without Jesus Christ. And he began to look for ways to publish an Advent Christian newspaper in South India.

To do this would require an Indian national fluent both in English

and Tamil, the dialect of those who lived in southern India. God led Captain Spence to Christian Massillamani, an educated Indian national follower of Christ. Mr. Massillamani had embraced distinctive Advent Christian doctrines and as written in an early description of Advent Christian mission work in India, "together [Captain Spence and Mr. Massillamani] knelt and prayed that God would bless them in their effort to give this glorious message to the people of India by printing tracts and other papers."

In 1888, several years after these two followers of Christ began to print newspapers, books, and tracts for distribution in southern India, Advent Christians in North America arranged for shipment of a printing press. Under Captain Spence's leadership, several schools were opened including the one that WHFMS would assume sponsorship for in 1898. The first Advent Christian congregation was established in the Guindy area of Madras in 1902 and Captain Spence's two daughters, Minnie and Alice, became the first Advent Christian missionaries sponsored directly by WHFMS.

A vision for service

While the India mission played a vital role in the early years of WHFMS, the work of "Advent Christian women organized for service" was not limited to one area of ministry. WHFMS was active in supporting the work of the two Advent Christian-related colleges, Aurora College and Boston Bible School (later Berkshire Christian College) that had been started in the 1890s. In 1904, the society purchased a home to house Boston Bible School and in 1912, WHFMS raised $500 for a room at Aurora College. Advent Christian women then worked through WHFMS to help support the new Advent Christian Home and Orphanage in Dowling Park, Fla.

By 1910, membership in the Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society had reached almost 3,200. The society organized an auxiliary for younger women (Young Women's Auxiliary) and through a generous legacy, purchased a building in Boston to serve as headquarters for the organization. Advent Christian mission work in India continued to grow as the India press was now printing over 10,000 booklets and tracts each year. "The work is simply wonderful," reported Z. Charles Beals, Advent Christian missionary to China, after his visit to India. "Well manned, well planned, and well carried on."

The growth of Advent Christian mission work in India continued through the worldwide economic depression of the 1930s and the Second World War of the 1940s. In the ten years following World War II, ten career missionaries were sent to the India field. At war's end, WHFMS was raising and sending over $2,100 each month to support Advent Christian mission work in India. "The money sent to India," according to a booklet published to mark the fiftieth anniversary of WHFMS, "covers missionaries' salaries and children's allowances, care of approximately 200 children in boarding schools, maintenance of twenty-three village outstations (including day schools and churches), salaries of national workers, upkeep of mission buildings (including missionaries' homes), maintenance of industrial school, maintenance of two dispensaries, Bible women's work, field expenses, and transit of missionaries to and from the field."

The report ended with a challenge. Yes, more missionaries and more funds were needed to carry out the work. But Advent Christians needed stronger "missionary leadership in the home churches and... more prayer" as well. "There is a place for everyone. Will you not find your place in the missionary program of our denomination?"

New directions

During the first half of the twentieth century, WHFMS not only carried responsibility for Advent Christian

General Conference honors retiring missionaries



Longtime Advent Christian missionaries enjoy a banquet and celebration held in their honor at the 1996 Advent Christian General Conference convention in Tampa, Florida. WHFMS played a vital support role in the ministry that these Advent Christian missionaries carried out in Japan, India, and the Philippines.

work in India but much of the burden for missions education within the Advent Christian Church. In 1958, as the second half of the century was well underway, oversight and supervision for Advent Christian mission work in India was transferred back to the American Advent Mission Society, and WHFMS took on even larger roles in missions education and support within the denomination. Before that transfer was made, WHFMS established the Helen Keeney Bible School in India and moved their headquarters to 64 Williston Road in Brookline, Massachusetts.

In 1966, delegates to the WHFMS convention adopted a new organizational philosophy that built on their commitment to see God's kingdom extended through the work of the Advent Christian Church. "The Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society," according to the new statement, "is an organization of the women of the Advent Christian Denomination interested in the total denominational program, and dedicated to spreading "The Gospel of the Kingdom" throughout the world. It's responsibility and mission shall be the organization of Christian women to a vital, spiritual, educational, financial, and numerical force to further the total program of the denomination."

Three years later, WHFMS offices were moved to the new denominational office building in Charlotte, N.C. Mrs. Marian Wrigley was appointed as executive secretary, a position that she served in until 1972 when she was succeeded by Mrs. Jean Balser. Several important events took place in the early 1970s. WHFMS honored Mrs. Velena B. Morse, a pioneer WHFMS officer who served as the society's first secretary, as she celebrated her ninety-seventh birthday. The second Sunday of September was designated annually as WHFMS Sunday. And the WHFMS intercessory prayer band was broadened into the spiritual life department.

1976 marked not only the two-hundredth anniversary of the United

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Now She Can Speak

A re-enactment of WHFMS founder Sarah Katherine Paine Taylor's words to an 1898 interdenominational women's gathering in Rockland, Maine.

Jeannine Taber
Morganton, N.C.

Editor's note: At the Piedmont Conference WHFMS annual convention held earlier this year at First Advent Christian Church in Concord, N.C., this re-enactment of WHFMS founder Sarah Taylor's presentation to an 1898 interdenominational women's meeting was written and presented by Jeannine Taber to mark the one-hundredth anniversary of WHFMS. Jeannine and her husband, Jim, and their children live in Morganton, N.C., where they serve as the pastoral family at First Advent Christian Church.

IN 1897, as Sarah Taylor participated in an interdenominational program in Rockland, Maine, she was asked to speak on the missionary work of Advent Christian women. The churches were listed in alphabetical order by denomination so Sarah knew she would be first to be called on to give a report. Challenged both by the request and the lack of such a program, she told them that she had nothing to tell this year, but if they would call on her in a year, she would have a report to give.

In 1898 she could speak! I am pleased to introduce to you, Sarah Taylor:

Communicating the Gospel of the Kingdom

Good morning! It is great to be here. I wish to speak to you about the new mission work in the Advent Christian Church. But first, let me tell you about myself.

I was born in Danielson, Connecticut, on November 19, 1847. I am now fifty years old, but the Lord continues to use me for his work in many ways. I was born in a Christian home and felt a calling to Christian work at an early age. By the time I was 18, I was already conducting evangelistic services.

Then I met Austin Wheeler Taylor, who shared my calling to evangelism. We were married September 3, 1869, when I was twenty-two years old. We became co-workers in evangelistic work and, for five years from 1869-1874, we held tent meetings throughout the New England states.

In 1877, we accepted a co-pastorate at the Advent Christian Church in Kennebunk, Maine. We served that church for ten years. While in Kennebunk, Austin felt called to do more evangelistic work, but desired to have a means to support us and our ministry. Therefore, Austin attended Boston Dental College and graduated in 1882 with a degree in dentistry. We left the church in Kennebunk and moved to Bridgeton, Maine, in 1887.

In 1894, I received a call to pastor a church in Rockland, Maine, and Austin moved his practice of dentistry to that city. Austin often

preached on Sundays as the Lord provided opportunity. During the four years I served as pastor of the Rockland Church, the Lord blessed and our membership quadrupled

A year ago, I stood before this interdenominational group with nothing to report on the mission work of the Advent Christian Church. I was disturbed by the lack of such an organization. But I was also challenged to see what could be done. On June 30, 1897, I met with three ladies from the Advent Christian Church in the nearby town of Friendship. We held a cottage prayer meeting asking God's blessing and guidance. On July 31, we adopted our constitution and elected officers. I am pleased to announce the founding of the Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society of the Advent Christian Church. We began with four members: myself, Sister Linnie Brewster, pastor of the Friendship Advent Christian Church; Susie Thompson, and Jessie Thompson. We had two honorary members: Mr. Thompson, and Dr. Taylor.

The purpose of our society is threefold: to engage and unite the efforts of the women of the Advent Christian Church in sending the gospel of the kingdom throughout the world; to deepen the spiritual life among believers in Christ; and by organization to render more effective the work of the women of our churches.

I am glad to report, through God's blessing, our membership has increased to three-hundred and through God's guidance, we have already begun the support of a school in Velacheri, India.

My message to you today is, "Little is much when God is in it." Never think your group is too small to do God's work. You never know how God can use you until you ask. Although we had a small beginning, God is blessing and guiding us.

I am confident that this work will continue to grow. As Philippians 3:6 says: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." A hundred years from now, I am confident that this work will spread throughout Advent Christian churches in Canada and the United States and our work will extend throughout the world.

Thank you for your attention, and God bless each one of you in your own outreach programs.

Epilogue

Sarah Katherine Paine Taylor continued to be an outstanding leader. In 1899, she became the Maine State Lecturer for the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

In May, 1908, Elder Austin Taylor became the third pastor of the Advent Christian Church of Friendship, Maine. Also, that year, Sarah Taylor visited the India mission field. She was sixty years old.

Elder Taylor continued to pastor the Friendship Church until 1917.

On August 4, 1920, Sarah Taylor fell asleep in Christ at the age of seventy-two. She was a woman dedicated to the Lord and evangelism. She was a natural leader with strong convictions and a consecration to the cause of the Advent Christian Church seldom to be equaled. ❑



Chelsea WHFMS Christmas party

The Maranatha WHFMS from Chelsea, Maine, Advent Christian Church sponsors an annual Christmas party and Yankee swap. Here at their 1995 party Mrs. Zoie Dill gets an assist with her gift from Kelsey Davis, daughter of former pastoral family David and Vicki Davis. Frani McGraw looks on.



Randee Davis

Dedication to Advent Christian Work

Randee Davis
Lenoir, N.C.

A HISTORY OF the Appalachian Region WHFMS cannot be told without first relating how the region came to be. This society is a cooperating society of the Appalachian Advent Christian Association, the fifth region of the Advent Christian General Conference of America.

In 1933 and 1934 Advent Christians from Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Maryland gathered for two great campmeetings at Blue Ridge Advent Christian Camp near Blowing Rock, North Carolina. From these gatherings of seven-hundred to eight-hundred people came the motivation which would foster the Appalachian Region. The General Conference Convention of 1934 officially accepted the Appalachian Region as its fifth region.

In 1936, the Appalachian Advent Christian Assembly purchased twenty-four acres of land seven miles outside of Blowing Rock, North Carolina, for a campsite. More land has since been added making a total of fifty-six acres today. A mission building was built and first used around 1939.

A group of dedicated women from various WHFM locals in the region met annually at the Blowing Rock camp. One of their primary purposes was the upkeep and maintenance of the mission building. Officers were elected by this mission group which was open to all women in the region. When the regional association took over maintenance of all buildings at the Blowing Rock campground, this group disbanded.

The organizational meeting of the Appalachian Region Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society, as we know it today, was held October 6, 1948, at Camp Hickory, in Western North Carolina. Forty-five delegates were present from seventeen locals. Mrs. Elsie Kirby was elected as the first president of this society and at the first meeting a constitution and by-laws were adopted. For many years a fall rally was held in the various conferences of the region. At present the regional WHFMS conducts one meeting annually in conjunction with the Blowing Rock family campmeeting during August.

The Region is made up of five conferences: Piedmont (Western North Carolina), West Virginia, Virginia, Pocahontas (southwest Virginia and southeast West Virginia), and Cumberland Valley (eastern Kentucky). In 1996 membership consisted of twenty-eight locals with four-hundred members.

Regional officers are:

President	Randee Davis, Hudson, N.C.
Vice-president	Karen Hall, Princeton, W.Va.
Secretary	Tonya Amelia, Hudson, N.C.
Treasurer	Marguerite Branch, Lenoir, N.C.
YWA Supt	Susan Smith, Monroe, N.C.
Junior Action	Diane Able, Elbert, W.Va.
King's Jewels	Carolyn Haynes, Waynesboro, Va.

Conference Presidents are:

Piedmont	Patsy Richardson, Lenoir, N.C.
Pocahontas	Carol Chambers, N. Tazewell, Va.
Virginia	Genevieve Kirk, Staunton, Va.
West Virginia	Anna Lou Rucker, Falling Rock, W.Va.

The object of this organization continues to be to engage and unite the efforts of Christian women in the Advent Christian Church in sending the Gospel of the Kingdom throughout the world, the deepening of spiritual life among believers in Christ, and by organization to render more efficient the work of the women of the churches.

While writing and researching this history of the Appalachian Region WHFMS, I was reminded of how much we owe the women who were so dedicated to the task of organizing this work. I feel like fifty actually know these dear people through their meticulous records and letters of fifty years ago. I am amazed at the time that our first regional president, Mrs. Elsie Kirby, put into the work. Each month she edited the women's page of the *Appalachian Advent Christian* newspaper, keeping the women of the region abreast of what was happening in all levels of Advent Christian ministry. She also saved these pages for us and all correspondence she sent and received during the formation of the regional society.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention some of the following women who were so instrumental in the organization of our society. Our first regional officers were:

President	Elsie Kirby
Vice-president	Mae Chambers
Secretary-treasurer	Bernice Chambers
Milow & YWA	Chloe Hankins
Cradle Roll	Irene German

Irene German served as regional cradle roll superintendent and from her letters and reports I discerned how dedicated she was to the task. Her idea was to enroll babies in the cradle roll department of the Sunday school and thus gain interest of the mothers and train the children. This was of particular interest to me as this work was begun in October of 1948. I was born in October 1948 and was enrolled as a baby in the cradle roll at the Advent Christian Church I still attend today. The cradle roll concept worked, thanks to women like Irene German.

Reverend Frank Davis, Appalachian Region superintendent, and Rev. Rolly Chambers, Appalachian regional president at the time, were two men instrumental in and supportive of the organization of this Society. They provided guidance but allowed the women the freedom to govern their organization stating in the notes that, "No minister was to be present at the organizational meeting." These were obviously astute men.

The mission building on the Blowing Rock campground has always been and continues to be dear to the hearts of the women of the Appalachian Region. They have helped to maintain this building through the years. Instrumental in this work were: Mrs. J.F. Whitman, Mrs. Robey Webb, Mrs. Hattie Steele, Mrs. Loy Triplett, and Miss Alice Robbins to mention only a few. Our regional project for 1996 was to install replacement windows in the mission building.

As we look back to 1948 we are uplifted by the fact that the women who founded the Appalachian regional WHFMS were dedicated to their task. In so many ways they were ahead of their time, ladies like Rev. Susie W. Davis who was also instrumental in the work. No doubt these women were inspired by another lady who fifty years earlier began the original work of the Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society, Mrs. Sarah K. Taylor, still working to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ as our Lord instructed us to do. How exciting to be a part of the WHFMS and to know that the women of this organization are committed to work together until our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ returns! ❑

Randee Davis is active at Berea Advent Christian Church in Collettsville, N.C., and is the Appalachian Region WHFMS president.



Eastern NC honors widows

Camp Dixie was the site of a banquet honoring the widows of deceased Advent Christian pastors in Eastern North Carolina. Conducted during the fall conference of the Eastern North Carolina WHFMS, the banquet brought encouragement to the six ministers' widows who attended (pictured above left to right): Frances Turnage, Ferrell Browning, Elsie Withrow, Lana Jernigan, Emesdeen Blackmon, and Melvine Parrish. Among the speakers for the occasion was Advent Christian missionary Margaret Helms. The praise group from United Advent Christian Church in Wilmington, N.C., offered a program of uplifting music. Recognition was given to these women for their years of supportive ministry. The event ended with gifts being presented to each minister's widow in the conference.



Pauline Easley

Helper's Union

THE PLACE? A large tent raised for campmeeting in Mendota, Illinois. The year? 1894. A group of loyal, active Advent Christian women met to organize a society designed to aid the newly-founded Mendota College (later Aurora College) and its Bible training department.

Women's ministry among Central Region Advent Christians predates the founding of WHFMS by three years. The Advent Christian women who met in Mendota chose the name "Helper's Union" and signed up over one hundred women as part of their organization that first year. Mrs. Elvira Mansfield, a talented organizer and speaker, became the first president. By 1896, several local societies had organized and one year later, some of those societies were actively supporting Advent Christian missions overseas.

In 1901, the Helper's Union applied to the Advent Christian General Conference for recognition as the women's mission society of the Midwest. Concern for world missions continued to grow when two Advent Christians who had studied at Mendota College, William Idel Edwards and Ella Jones, went as missionaries to India in 1901 and 1906 respectively. WHFMS president Sarah K. Taylor came in 1904 to the Helper's Union annual meeting and addressed the women gathered as a fraternal delegate. As ties between the Helper's Union and the national WHFMS continued to grow, Mrs. Ella Pullen served as the first Middle West vice-president of WHFMS. The Helper's Union formally affiliated with Advent Christian General Conference in 1921, and with WHFMS in 1927.

Mrs. Myrtle Singleterry, veteran Advent Christian missionary to China, became president in 1932 and provided twenty-two years of inspiring leadership and faithful service. She was succeeded by Mrs. Dorothy Gransee in 1956. Mrs. Gransee's term saw an increase in financial giving and an emphasis upon organizational development at the local church and conference levels. By the time Mrs. Doris Colby was elected president in 1964, the Central Region WHFMS had forty-six local societies and five conference associations.

As a joint effort, the Central Region WHFMS and its member conference and local church societies maintained the Singleterry cottage and gift shop at Camp Rude. Societies from the region provided items to sell in the gift shop which was open throughout the summer. Annual proceeds were divided between one home and one foreign mission project.

Marjorie Denius was elected president in 1969 and was succeeded by Joyce Mays in 1974. In 1978 the regional project focused on providing money for a child at the Advent Christian Village in Dowling Park, Florida.

Nancy Winslow was elected president in 1981. Regional projects for 1982 included monetary support for the Memphis Challenge and for the scholarship fund at Oro Bible College. Frances Gray was elected president in 1983 and that year Central Region women continued to focus their efforts on the Memphis Challenge and on a new overseas project, the India capital funds drive.

Carole Lewis began six years of service as Central Region WHFMS president in 1986. Each local WHFMS in the Central Region was encouraged to give $5.00 per member to the Joshua Project and set a goal of $600 for support of Advent Christian missionaries David Vignali, and Steven and Ann Lay.

In 1992, Linda Fritchey succeeded Carole Lewis as president, and regional WHFM projects for the early 1990s included support for the Joshua Project, Berkshire Christian College, and the Advent Christian congregation in Memphis. By 1995, there were nineteen local WHFM societies with 210 members active in the Central Region.

Current officers are Pauline Easley, president; Barbara Ashley, secretary; Ruby Ross, treasurer; Margie Schulz, Mary Rogers, and Jean Hendrickson, members-at-large; and Cindy Williams, auxiliary chairperson. Betty Bockover, Marilyn Shoemaker, and Pam Wright serve on the regional WHFMS board as conference presidents. ❑

Celebrating Fifty Years of Ministry

TO SOME, the passing of fifty years is incomprehensible. But to many of the women who were present at the organizational meeting of the Eastern Region *Woman's Home and Foreign Missions Society* (WHFMS), it seems that only a short time has passed. Gathered in a tent on the Alton Bay, New Hampshire, campground, a group of women representing state and local societies of the Eastern Region united on August 18, 1947, for the purpose of organizing a regional society. Helen Lyman was elected president, Ada Whiting, vice-president, and Pearl Pender, secretary-treasurer, each serving for the next eleven years.

The first annual convention was opened at 10:00 a.m. on August 10, 1948, in the Chapel at Alton Bay with a delegate strength of sixty-eight representing the nearly nineteen hundred WHFMS members of the Eastern Region. The work of the WHFMS was considered with reports given by conference presidents, and the work of the national WHFMS was shared. It was noted that about 50 percent of the members of the *Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society* was at that time located in the Eastern Region.

At that early convention in 1948, the development of the organization was traced. Because of rapid growth it was deemed wise to organize into local church associations (known as "locals"). From this point, conference societies were organized followed by regional organizations. The Eastern Region WHFM society was born when it was decided to move the national convention from Alton Bay, New Hampshire, to other sections of the country. The five regional WHFM organizations were: Pacific Coast Conference, Mid-West Helpers Union, All-South, Appalachian Region, and Eastern Region, all banded together in a great missionary enterprise.

One of the early mission projects undertaken by the Eastern Region women was to finance construction of a mission cottage on the Alton Bay, N.H., campground. By 1949, construction had been started and the following year the cottage was nearly complete. Floors were to be covered with linoleum, while quilts and bed linens had been donated. In 1954, it was voted to turn the cottage over to the general society with WHFM locals in eastern Massachusetts and New Hampshire helping with the housekeeping.

In 1951, the Eastern Region accepted financial support for Victor Sadhanandam, who was employed by our mission in India. Since there was no budget in those early years, it was voted to take the Tuesday night offering of the annual convention for this project. This arrangement continued until 1969 and, by that time, Mr. Sadhanandam was receiving $450 per year. Also in 1951, it was voted to ask the board of regents at New England School of Theology (N.E.S.T.) to consider hiring a full-time Mission instructor. By 1953, three women from the Eastern Region—Dorris Gedney, Helen Keeney, and Jennie Wooldridge—served on the board of regents at N.E.S.T.

With the death of National President Helen Keeney, delegates in 1955 voted to raise $3,000 as a memorial to this beloved president. Several projects were considered with an overwhelming vote in favor of using these funds for the construction of a Bible training school building in India, to be named in her memory.

Until 1964, annual conventions were held at various campgrounds with the date changing from year to year. It was voted to hold all future

conventions at Alton Bay, N.H., during the latter part of July. This was eventually changed to the latter part of June.

God blessed the financial giving of these mission ladies. In 1958, the Eastern Region WHFMS established their first budget - a total of $2,110. By 1986, that total had grown to $9,400. In 1984, $15,000 was pledged for an emergency fund to help insure that home and foreign mission's budgets would be met. That goal was met in six months! In 1985, it was voted to raise $10,000 toward three projects in India and the Philippines. At the 1986 convention it was reported that this goal had been exceeded! Another $10,000 was pledged by December 1987. In 1995, Eastern regional societies raised funds for new missionaries to India. Throughout these fifty years, the *Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society* of the Eastern Region has contributed significantly to the cause of Christ around the world.

In recent years, a women's retreat has been held at Alton Bay in the fall, attracting a record 131 women this past year. In 1990, the Eastern Region hosted the national WHFMS in conjunction with General Conference on the Gordon College campus. The home for Marion Damon and Barbara White on the Plainville, Connecticut, campground was completed. In 1995, Marion Damon (who hails from the Eastern Region) was chosen *"Missionary of the Year"* by Under His Wings Ministries.

The officers for 1997 are: Barbara Schaeffner, president; Ruth Smith, vice-president; Alma Lampard, secretary; Jane Sturdevant, treasurer; and Nancy Pritchard, representing children's ministries.

Throughout the one-hundred-year history of the *Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society*, a number of women from Eastern Region have served in leadership. Past national presidents include: Sarah Taylor, Maude Chadsey, Helen Keeney, Helen Lyman, Beatrice Moore, and Hazel Blackstone, who currently serves in this position. Barbara Schaeffner, who sang a solo at the first annual convention in 1948, challenged the delegates in her report last year: "For 99 years the WHFMS has been an effective part of the Advent Christian Church. We are striving to be even more effective in our churches for our Lord Jesus than we ever have been because Jesus is coming very soon!"

The *Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society* in the Eastern Region can look back with gratefulness to God for what he has done, while looking ahead to what he will yet accomplish. As the work of missions in the local church has expanded, the challenge and responsibility of missions in churches is still largely dependent on WHFM Societies. May God grant another fifty years of faithful service should he tarry, that his work might go forward around the world. ❑

PAST PRESIDENTS

Helen Lyman	1948-1957
Ada Whiting	1957-1964
Beulah Towle	1964-1968
Dorris Gedney	1968-1969
Elsie Towle	1969-1976
Ann Reynolds	1976-July / Dec.
Beatrice Moore	1977-1986
Barbara Schaeffner	1986-present



WHFMS Program Kit Committee

Planning and preparing the annual WHFMS program kit is a process that takes dedicated volunteers committed to serving Jesus Christ. The committee responsible for the 1998 program kit met at Grace Advent Christian Church in Walterboro, S.C., to lay the groundwork for the kit which will reflect the theme "Women Walking With the Lord on a Mission." The committee plans the theme, selects topics for each individual program, and arranges for writers. Pictured above are (left to right): Hazel Blackstone, National WHFMS president, Mary Barber, Carolyn Schaeffner, program committee chair, Odessa Bryan, and Barbara Nobles.

Advent Christian Women Organized for Service and Support

WHEN WHFMS was established one-hundred years ago this July, the "All-South" region of the Advent Christian General Conference included all of the United States south of the Mason-Dixon line, east of the Mississippi River, plus the states of Louisiana, Texas, and New Mexico. The only Advent Christian campground serving this large region was at Dowling Park, Florida.

The 1928 General Conference convention held at Dowling Park served as the impetus for organizing the Southern Region WHFMS. Before that, there were Ladies' Aid Societies throughout the region, and there is evidence that Advent Christian women in Florida had organized a WHFMS in their conference. In 1927, the women in that conference invited Advent Christian women from throughout the south to organize the All-South Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society. With National WHFMS President Mrs. Maude Chadsey presiding, the All-South WHFMS was organized with Mrs. James A. Downs as president and Miss Myrtle Smith as secretary-treasurer.

By 1932, membership stood at 184. Due to advancing age and failing health, Mrs. Downs resigned in 1932 and Elsie Kirby, the young, energetic vice-president succeeded her. In her role as president, Mrs. Kirby faced a threefold challenge: training new WHFMS local leaders, planning for greater efficiency, and encouraging the already existing Ladies' Aid Societies to affiliate with WHFMS.

Six years after formally organizing, the All-South WHFMS underwent a major change in size. Advent Christian conferences in Western North Carolina, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland organized the Appalachian Region and WHFMS locals in those areas affiliated with the new region. At the same time Advent Christian congregations and WHFMS societies in Louisiana, Texas, and New Mexico had affiliated with the Central Region.



Southern region officers

1996-97 Southern Region WHFMS officers: (left to right): Nell Lassetter, Mary K. Barber, Donna Ashworth, Barbara Nobles, Adel Carter, Eloise Robertson, Ruby McLamb, Jeanette Johnson, Odessa Bryan.

Vital support for world missions

Foreign missions began to emerge as an important emphasis with the coming of the first Advent Christian missionary, Miss Alice Longland of India, to the region in 1930. Each conference WHFMS accepted a foreign mission project and a Mission Hour became a regular feature of campmeeting in 1933 when the Clothey family, on furlough from India, were guests.

Home missions was emphasized by the All-South WHFMS in two important ways during the 1930s. The Society provided support for building new Advent Christian congregations in the southern United States and strongly supported the Advent Christian Home and Orphanage in Dowling Park. By their tenth anniversary celebration, membership had increased to five hundred.

Support for WHFMS auxiliary groups has always been strong. Many Advent Christian congregations have active King's Jewels, Junior Action, and Young Women's Auxiliary groups. By 1976, the Southern Region WHFMS was

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Missions Emphasis in Japan and Mexico

THREE YEARS after she organized the first Woman's Home and For eign Mission Society in Friendship, Maine, Sarah K. Taylor journeyed to the Pacific Coast to help Advent Christian women there organize WHFMS groups. In addition to Mrs. Taylor's work, Mrs. Nina MacFayden did much to introduce and promote WHFMS on the West Coast.

Advent Christian mission work in Japan has its roots on the Pacific Coast. After hearing Miles Grant preach, Mr. Masador Iwagoye from Oakland, California, became interested in Advent Christian doctrinal distinctives and expressed the desire to return to Japan to proclaim the truth of life only in Jesus Christ to his fellow countrymen. He was ordained by the Northern California Conference and sent to Japan to establish Advent Christian mission work in that country. In its early stage, the Japan work was supported almost entirely by Advent Christian women and young people through their respective WHFM and Loyal Worker societies.

WHFM locals in various churches organized their own conference unions and in 1923, an organization of the four unions— Willamette Valley, Western Washington/ British Columbia, Southern California, and Northern California— was formed to more efficiently correlate the interest and work of the missionary societies in the entire region.

Miss Ella Jones, who was home on extended furlough, was the ardent promoter of the Western WHFM Union and was elected its first president in 1923. She was succeeded by Miss Jess Saunders. Mrs. Frank Johnson was elected president in 1928 and served for twelve years. Grace Hudson assumed leadership in 1940 and was followed by Sadie Metzler who became president in 1950. Aleta Robinson was elected in 1956 and was succeeded by Winona Vannah. Maxine Lobb served from 1961 to 1967 followed by Marjorie Pitts in 1967-1973. Ricki Hickel was elected in 1973 and served for several months before moving to Charlotte, N.C. Her term was filled by Dorothy Gransee. Alice Aulis was elected president in 1975. Dorothy Gransee served as president for the 1980-1983 triennial. Maxine Lobb became president in 1983, Nancy Winslow in 1986, Marge Christianson in 1992, and Dorothy Warriner in 1995. Regional WHFMS meetings are held in conjunction with the Western Region triennial convention.

WHFMS in the Western Region has supported several regional projects. For several years, the regional WHFMS provided active support for home mission work in New Mexico under the direction of Bill Chapman. They also support ACCENT (Advent Christian Crusaders Enter New Training) which originated in the Western Region in 1967 as a summer ministry for college students designed to challenge them to consider home missions as a vocation. In 1990, the women of the Western Region took on a new special project, support for the new Advent Christian mission work in Mexico, especially Tecate Bible Institute. They also played a part in providing the retirement home for Advent Christian missionaries Marion Damon and Barbara White. ❑

Former Advent Christian missionary to Japan Dorothy Warriner contributed to this report.

History

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States but a major change in the relationship of WHFMS to the Advent Christian General Conference. Delegates to the WHFMS biennial convention that year voted to implement the Advent Christian denominational reorganization ratified two years earlier by delegates to the 1974 General Conference. The Massachusetts corporation known as the "WHFMS of the Advent Christian Church" was dissolved. WHFMS became a part of and subject to the jurisdiction of the Advent Christian General Conference of America, Inc. Mrs. Balser's title was changed from executive secretary to director of women's work and one year later, she was asked to broaden the scope of her responsibilities to include all areas of women's ministries within the Advent Christian Church.

As the 1980s began, over 3,300 Advent Christian women were active in 215 local WHFMS societies. Caroline Michael succeeded Jean Balser as Director of Women's Minis-

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that there is a resounding silence about hell in many pulpits, although he likely would differ from me in explaining the reason why. I am convinced that the major cause for silence about final punishment in the churches today is neither loss of gospel conviction nor lack of nerve. It is rather a widespread and uneasy awareness that the traditional doctrine of everlasting conscious torment rests on shaky scriptural interpretation, and that it is patently inconsistent with the character of God revealed in Scripture and especially in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many conscientious Christians simply cannot conceive that the God who loved sinners so much that he gave his Son on the cross for their salvation intends to preserve the lost alive for the sole purpose of torturing them throughout endless ages.

A return to pristine biblical teaching on final punishment looses these timid tongues. God will raise the saved unto immortality and incorruption, but Scripture breathes not a word about the wicked receiving either (1 Cor. 15:50-58). The lost will be raised, to be sure - but to condemnation rather than to live forever (John 5:28-29). Judged and banished from God's presence, they will be expelled into the lake of fire, which is the second death (Matt. 13:40-43; 25:30, 41; Rev. 20:14-15; 21:8).

Jesus warns of everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:46), and Paul tells us exactly what that punishment will be. It will be everlasting destruction (2 Thess 1:9) - at the hands of God who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell (Matt. 10:28). We cannot possibly say it more plainly than this: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Against such a backdrop of eternal death, the gospel promise of eternal life shines all the more brightly. Whoever believes in Jesus will not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). Those are our only alternatives, and now is the time to make them plain to a world so desperately in need of life. ❑

tries. And support of Advent Christian missions and denominational ministry has continued to grow during the 1980s and 1990s through programs like Christmas in October and ministries like Junior Action, King's Jewels, and Young Women's Auxiliary. Local societies in Advent Christian congregations across Canada and the United States continue to remain the backbone of the Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society one-hundred years after Sarah K. Taylor's vision for Advent Christian women involved in ministry both at home and around the world. ❑

This historical sketch compiled from the 1984 WHFMS Handbook and from a variety of articles and materials.

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K
A B I D E
S E E K
K N O W

September

1 Praise God for the opportunity that Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** had to represent Advent Christians at a global consultation of missions leaders held during early July in Johannesburg, South Africa.

2 Pray that the contacts Rev. Patterson made with Christians in **South Africa** sympathetic to Advent Christian beliefs will bear fruit in the months and years to come.

3 Praise God for the opportunity that Pastor **Amos Gbaa** had to return to Liberia earlier this year to meet with Advent Christians in the city of Buchanan.

4 Pray that God will give strength to Rev. **Ben Cleon Sr.**, leader of the Advent Christian Church in Liberia. Rev. Cleon has faced much personal hardship during the Liberian civil war.

5 Praise God for the continued growth of three Advent Christian congregations in **Ghana**. These congregations have been established by Pastor **Amos Gbaa**.

6 Pray that Advent Christian pastors and church leaders in the West African nations of **Ghana**, **Liberia**, and **Nigeria** will be effective as they communicate the gospel of Christ through their ministries.

7 Praise God that Pastor **Desiree Ahola** has been able to lead a person to Christ who is from the nation of Ukraine.

8 Pray that God will provide Pastor Ahola and the Advent Christian congregation in **Zagreb, Croatia**, with a permanent meeting place to carry out their ministry.

9 Praise God for the ministry that Asia/Pacific Area Director **George Teshera** has had among Advent Christian leaders in India, Malaysia, and Japan.

10 Pray that God will give wisdom and discernment to Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** as he considers opportunities for future expansion of Advent Christian world missions.

11 Praise God for our **New Zealand** partners in Advent Christian missions who work in strategic ways to further the gospel of Jesus Christ in our Advent Christian fields.

12 Pray for New Zealand Missionaries **Russell and Noelle Carle** as they provide leadership for the Takanini Church of Christ, Life and Advent.

13 Praise God for the work of the **New Zealand Conditional Immortality Association**, a ministry committed to communicating the message of Life Only in Christ.

14 Pray that God will raise up church planters for the many **New Zealand** communities that do not have an active Christian fellowship.

15 Praise God for the valuable short-term help that **Floyd and Musa Powers** provided for Advent Christian missions in Japan.

16 Pray that God will raise up Advent Christians to serve in **India and Honduras**.

17 Praise God for the effective ministry and witness that Advent Christian congregations in **Japan** continue to have in their communities.

18 Pray that **BethAnn Lay** will experience God's healing touch as she continues to battle a serious illness.

19 Praise God for the opportunity that **Barbara White** and **Marion Damon** have had to enjoy a brief furlough in the United States.

20 Pray for **Marion and Barbara** as they prepare to return to India to oversee the work of Advent Christian missions in that country.

21 Praise God for the leadership that **Gell Knight** is providing for the Advent Christian school of evangelism in Kodaikanal, India.

22 Pray that the Holy Spirit will grant direction in several important issues affecting Advent Christian missions in **India**.

23 Praise God for the appointment of **Stephen Hughes** as interim director of Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

24 Pray for **Steve Hughes** as he not only oversees the work of Oro Bible College but as he establishes an agricultural training ministry on the Philippine Island of **Mindanao**.

25 Praise God for **David Vignali's** ministry in working with Teen Missions teams in the Philippines.

26 Pray for Philippine missionaries **Jeff and Penny Vann** as they continue their teaching ministry at Oro Bible College.

27 Praise God for the Advent Christian **college and university students** who have already begun their fall semester.

28 Pray that God will give vision and insight to those providing leadership for Advent Christian **urban and ethnic congregations** in the United States.

29 Praise God for the work that he is accomplishing through **your pastor** this week.

30 Pray that God will give **your church** a burden to communicate the gospel to men and women, boys and girls in your community who are lost without Jesus Christ.

Editorial continued from page 3

young bride. Efficient and well-organized, this group took seriously its obligation to Advent Christian missions. The Friendship, Maine, society epitomized a missions-minded WHFMS. It embedded in me the importance of giving, even if it comes with personal sacrifice. Venturing West, the Lewiston, Idaho, Church of New Hope helped me to see missions opportunities in the lives of those in my community. The mission field of America looms out our backdoors and we must not neglect those ministry opportunities.

1996 brought me to a new WHFMS in Bangor, Maine. I've been overwhelmed already with their love and eagerness to do whatever it takes to better our ministry. With this openness and obvious commitment to prayer I see good things ahead.

"A picture is worth a thousand words," someone has said. Perusing the snapshots of WHFMS influence in my life has given me volumes of memories, myriads of opportunities, and a multitude of blessings. My worldview has been broadened.

Standing on the threshold of a new century is an opportune time to set the direction for the future. We determine the history of WHFMS in the 21st century. What legacy do we want to leave behind? ❑

Southern continued from page 19

the largest of the five Advent Christian regions. Their two-day convention, held in conjunction with the Southern Advent Christian Association annual meeting, continues to be a highlight. Women of the Southern Region continue to be heavily involved in special foreign mission support through Christmas in October, Mission Minute Men, and Penny Crusade. Their support for the work of the Advent Christian Village in Dowling Park, Florida, remains strong. And women of the Southern Region continue their support of Advent Christian United Ministries, thus assuring support for the entire ministry of the Advent Christian Church.

"Lighting the Candle, Blazing the Trail" was the theme for the Southern Region's celebration of the one-hundredth anniversary of WHFMS. The celebration, held at Grace Advent Christian Church in Walterboro, S.C., in conjunction with the Southern Region WHFMS annual meeting featured displays of WHFMS history and of Advent Christian mission work.

Current officers are Mrs. Barbara Nobles, president, Mrs. Mary K. Barber, vice-president, Mrs. Edna Phillips, secretary, Mrs. Ruby Lamb, treasurer, Mrs. Eloise Robertson, Young Women's Auxiliary superintendent, Mrs. Jeanette Johnson, Junior Action superintendent, and Mrs. Donna Ashworth, King's Jewels superintendent. ❑

The Mission-minded church

Bertha Cassidy

Editor's Note: Advent Christian missionary Bertha Cassidy served in China for over thirty years during the first half of the twentieth century where God used her and her fellow missionaries to reach hundreds of men and women, boys and girls for Jesus Christ. During that time, she wrote a short tract that challenged Advent Christian congregations in Canada and the United States to be missionary churches. The Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society sponsored the production and distribution of Miss Cassidy's challenge, and because its message remains vital today, we reproduced it with some slight editorial changes in this issue marking the one-hundredth anniversary of WHFMS.

THE FIRST missionary society to send out workers was the Christian congregation in Antioch. In that church, the Holy Spirit was free to direct, and it became the center of a vast enterprise in that and following centuries. Any church filled with the Spirit of God will be a missionary church, so the greatest hope for creating missionary interest in a church is to pray for real revival! To this end, let us all pray, for the harvest is ripe, the workers few, and the time short!

A *missionary-minded pastor* is a great asset to any church. The pastor can keep the needs of the world before his people in his public prayers and his sermons. He will advocate support of the mission program, can invite missionaries on furlough to visit the congregation, see that informative literature is on display, and that missionary periodicals are being subscribed for.

In some churches the women's society takes care of the promotional work, but it is *better* for all the church to be actively interested in all the work. A mission commission can be formed to represent all the groups, and they can cooperate in any plans that are formed.

Mission rallies, attended by people from congregations in a given geographical area, can be helpful to all who come. All the fields can be presented at that time. The young people can prepare maps and posters; take part in pageants, and collect materials for a mission display. A missionary film can be presented, or missionaries on furlough asked to speak.

Missions needs your support

Challenge your people to financially support missions. While we do not want to be selfish in our giving, there is no one to support Advent Christian missionaries except Advent Christian people. Appeals will come from many organizations but remember that we are responsible for those whom we have sent to the foreign fields. They must be able to carry on their ministries and this takes the financial support of Advent Christians. People will pray more after they give, and it seems that blessings spiritually follow the church that obeys the Lord's command to "go" by giving.

Dr. Frank Laubach says that there should be ten thousand intercessors behind each individual missionary. Otherwise, they will be powerless before the difficulties that confront them. In this most important work, the older people in the church as well as shut-ins can be enlisted. But all—pastor and people—should obey the command to "pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into his harvest." WHFMS produces a monthly *Prayer and Praise* bulletin and the *Advent Christian Witness* offers a monthly column of missions-related prayer needs.

The *Sunday school* and *youth fellowship* are the fields from which missionary recruits will come, and much should be done to keep missions in front of children and young people. A story can be told once a month in the opening or closing exercise of church school. A map of the world should be prominent, and places pointed out as the story is told. Pictures of missionaries can be hung up on the walls. Names of individuals can be given to each Sunday-school class for prayer.

Other simple projects can be suggested. Have the children make missionary scrapbooks. Some Sunday-school lessons include material for mission study, but even without that, Sunday-school teachers can start in a simple way to interest their students in missions. Life-stories from Advent Christian missionaries and national Christians can be secured and missions-related material for children's groups can be secured through WHFMS. Penny Crusade provides a valuable opportunity every year for children and adults to learn more about the work of Advent Christian missions.

Above all, the challenge should be kept before the children and young people continually. So many have received the call to missionary service when they were very young. Christian parents, by praying for missionaries by name and encouraging the children to do the same, will do more than they realize to help their children to respond to the call when the Lord says, "Who will go for us?" Nineteen centuries have gone by and the Good News has not yet reached "the uttermost parts of the earth." We are responsible for our own generation, so let us start now to do our part. ❑

Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
Box 17 Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Marion Damon (March 27)
Box 17 Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Jeff and Penny Vann
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
2114 Prairie Rd.
Aurora, IL 60506

New Zealand

Russell and Noelle Carle
(December 30 and December 19)
(Ryan, November 15, 1979)
(Emily, June 23, 1983)
(Peter, August 14, 1991)
11 Rosehill Ave.
Papakura
Auckland 1702
NEW ZEALAND

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
Bududuram Refugee Camp
c/o NMP Box 46
State House
Accra, GHANA

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

China
Our pastor in China
All correspondence should be channelled through the missions office.

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devadason
Beulah Margaret Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Croatia

Desirée Ahola
c/o Advent Christian Croatia Ministry
P.O. Box 29
Nova Gradiska
35400 Croatia

Mexico

Carlos Quintero
387 W. Poppyfields Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
(818) 791-2447

Mario and Elena Cortez
Joel and Omega Garcia
Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Carlos Quintero

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Director
Pomeroy Carter; Planned Giving
Dwight Carpenter; Student Ministries
John Roller; Urban/Ethnic Ministries
George Teshera; Asia/Pacific Area Director

P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

Harold Patterson; World Missions
Millie Griswold; Resource Development
Russell Giasson; Services
Richard Russell; Church Relations

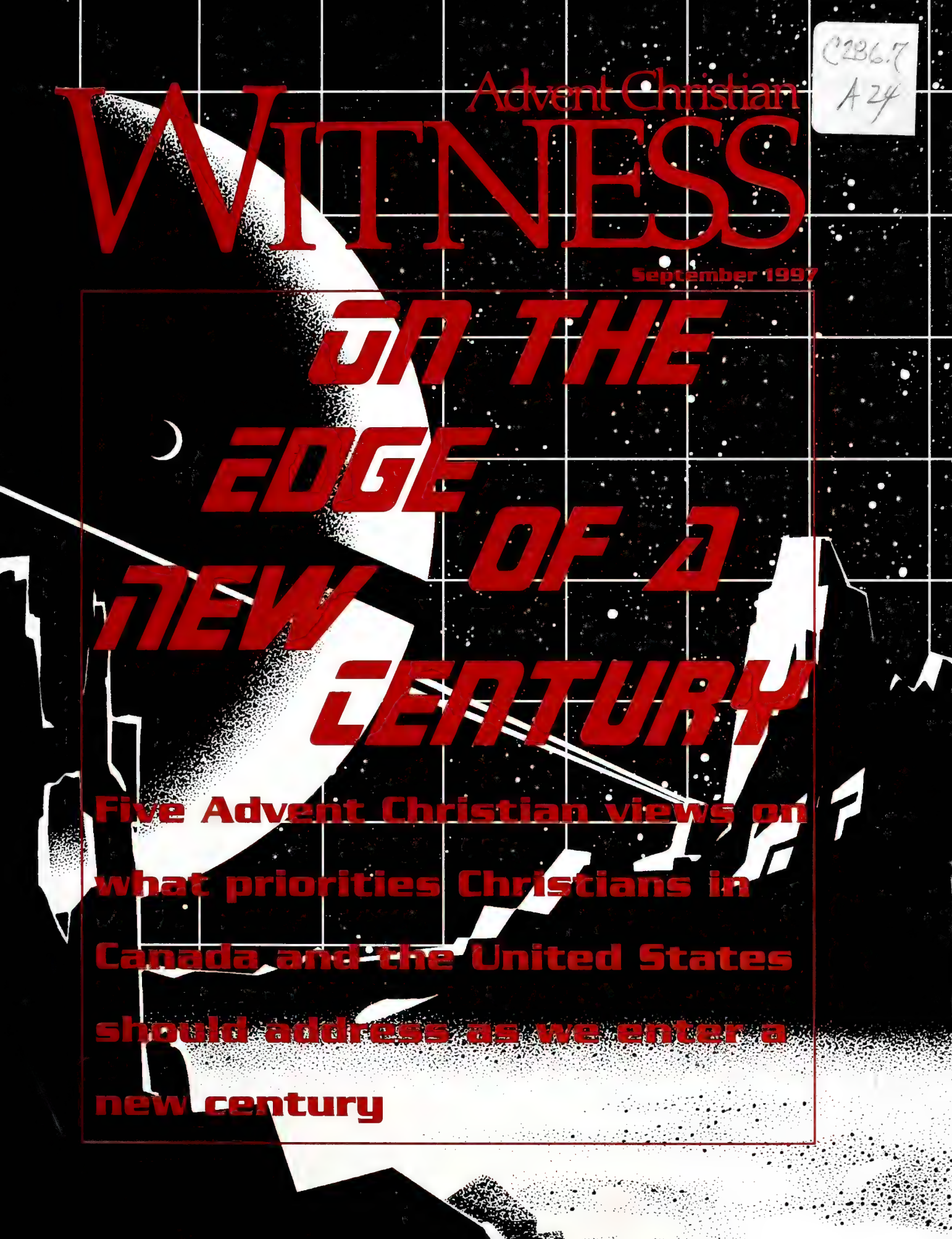
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Advent Christian

WITNESS

September 1997



ON THE EDGE OF A NEW CENTURY

Five Advent Christian views on what priorities Christians in Canada and the United States should address as we enter a new century

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Jeff Vann reminds us that learning how to communicate the good news of God's love to others who are different from us culturally or ethnically is a vital ministry in which God is calling more American Christians to participate.

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Volume 45, Number 7

Advent Christian WITNESS

Editor **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy**

Proofreader **Dawn Rutan**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria



A Fond Farewell

FOR EACH OF US, there come times of transition. Marriage. Family. A new location. A new job. A new school. Retirement. Transitions can be difficult, especially when you're called to leave something you know and love for a new challenge. That last statement describes my feelings as I complete fifteen years of work at the Advent Christian denominational offices. The new challenges the Lord has placed before me are exciting. Yet as I leave this position, it's hard not to reflect on the joys and challenges of serving as your editor. It's a privilege that I'll always be thankful for.

Transitions can be difficult, especially when you're called to leave something you know and love for a new challenge.

We stand on the edge of a new century—a century that offers great possibilities, great challenges, and great uncertainties for followers of Jesus Christ. God has allowed the human race to discover knowledge and technology far beyond what many of us could imagine possible even twenty years ago. But for all of their benefits, our new discoveries make it easier to embrace the notion that human beings ultimately can control their circumstances and their destinies.

The Christian faith challenges that fantasy and reminds us that our sin and alienation from our Creator stand at the core of our human condition. No matter how sophisticated our technology, no matter how great our knowledge, life and hope cannot be found apart from Jesus Christ. This is the core of the Christian faith that Advent Christians, indeed all Christians, are called to proclaim in our words and in the way we live. Life and hope cannot be found in our own resources, in our own dreams, in our own activity, or in our own efforts to control our lives. They come by God's grace expressed through Jesus Christ. Nothing more. Nothing less.

Although my work as editor of the *Advent Christian Witness* is formally complete with this issue, I will continue to edit the magazine for the next three to four issues while the search for a new editor continues. But since this represents, at least in a formal sense, my last words for this column, I'd like to offer three suggestions to Advent Christians as we ponder what God has for us on the edge of a new century.

First, be prayerful. During August, I had the privilege of spending a week at the Alton Bay, N.H. Christian Conference Center. During one evening service, Dr. Sid Bradley reminded us that while we often think of prayer as preparation for the battles of Christian living that we face, we need to see, in his words, "that prayer is the battle." We need a fresh emphasis on prayer not only individually but corporately. When we try try to live or serve without regular communication with our Creator, we risk losing our dependence upon God. And we fail to allow the Holy Spirit to work in and through us.

Second, be forgiving. Jesus reminded his followers that cultivating a spirit of forgiveness has implications in terms of our eternal destiny. "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Unforgiveness is a cancer that can eat away at our personal lives and severely damage God's work in our congregations. People are human. There will be times when they say and do the wrong things. And there will be times when they disagree. Those realities apply to Christians as well. We are people who are still learning what it means to follow Jesus every day of our lives. I think that's why Jesus wants his followers to learn how to practice forgiveness. We need forgiveness when we sin and we need to learn how to forgive others when we've been wronged.

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ON TRIAL

I HAD BEEN in that imposing courtroom once before, when it was filled with prospective jurors waiting to see if they might have to serve. But this day was different.

The room seemed massive and impersonal. One one side, a dozen people huddled uncomfortably on the pew-like benches, close to the exit doors. Near the other side, two women representing Human Services sat close together on the front pew facing the judge's bench, where two court recorders were already at their respective places.

The center section of the room, surrounded by heavy, carved wooden railings, was empty except for two tables, each with two or three chairs facing front. At the further table, a slim, youngish-looking blonde woman busied herself shuffling papers. She was the district attorney, who had prosecuted the case for the Department of Human Services.

At the nearer table, an anxious-looking young fellow conversed quietly with a handsome, gray-haired older man who was impeccably attired in a gray business suit.

We were all there for a serious reason. The young man at the defendant's table was there for sentencing. Nearly four years previously, his stepdaughter had accused him of sexually molesting her. The girl was a compulsive liar with a psychopathic personality. There was no evidence to support her claims, which grew more elaborate, and more repulsive each time she repeated her story. The young father had never been interviewed about the supposed crime since the first accusations had been investigated by a state police detective who claimed the girl was lying. The father was forced to move out of his home, then allowed to move back in. Then he was forced to move out again, then allowed to move back once more.

Meanwhile, the stepdaughter had been placed in foster care. Over a period of three - to - four years, she had lived in a series of foster homes, some of them on two different occasions. But in each home, eventually she had accused or threatened to accuse some member of the foster household with sexual abuse, at which point she would be whisked away to the next home by human services. These accusations had never been investigated, and no charges relating to them had ever been brought against anyone. Only the stepfather had faced charges. The stepdaughter had finally been placed in a school for troubled youth, about two-hundred miles away.

When the case had finally come to trial, it was heard before a Superior Court Judge, and decided by a jury. In spite of what seemed to be overwhelming evidence that the girl was lying, the jury had brought back a verdict of "guilty." They had deliberated a long time, well past the supper hour. The majority of the jurors had believed the father to be innocent, but in the face of two who had adamantly insisted he was guilty anyway, proof or no proof, eventually the others had capitulated, brought in the verdict and gone home for a rather late meal.

The young man's lawyer had asked the judge to consider either an acquittal or a retrial. The judge had granted a retrial.

That should have been the start of a fair hearing for this young man. But it wasn't. The district attorney ap-

pealed the judge's order for retrial to the state Supreme Court. Everyone had been sure that the retrial would be allowed, but it was not to be. The judge's decision was reversed, and he was given stern orders to pronounce a sentence.

And so this small group was gathered in this courtroom. Anxiety was running high as we were ordered to rise while the judge entered the bench and sat down.

The district attorney read the charges. They were gross, explicit, extreme. I knew the defendant could not have done such acts, even if someone had offered him thousands of dollars to do so. In fact, I knew that if he had been willing to lie in the beginning, to say he had been guilty even though he was innocent, to take human service's "rehabilitation" counseling, and tell them whatever they wanted him to say, he would have been free of all charges and anything related to them would have been expunged from his record. He was standing there, waiting to be sentenced simply because his personal integrity would not allow him to plead guilty to a gross sexual crime which he had not committed.

There was an intake of breath among the gallery as the charges were read. They were even worse than those at the trial, although no one understood how that could be allowed.

My turn to speak

The judge turned to the defendant and asked if he had anything to say in his own behalf. His lawyer said the defendant would not be speaking for himself, but that four others would be speaking for him: his employer, his pastor, his mother, and his wife.

In that order, each of us stood and spoke of this man's reliability as a hard worker, his reputation for honesty and integrity, his assuming responsibility for providing for the needs of two step-children plus two natural children that followed, his lifelong desire and effort to "do the right thing." Each of us asked for a lenient sentence. We had all been told that the usual sentence for a first-time offender with no previous record was six to eighteen months. Anything under a year could be served in the nearby county jail, instead of the men's reformatory at the other end of the state.

When all the pleas had been heard, the defendant was asked to stand. The judge read a long, prepared explanation of all that could happen under the law. After what seemed like eternity, he pronounced the sentence: eight years, two of which were forgiven because of "mitigating circumstances," leaving six years all but four of which would be served on probation. Oh yes, and there was to be no contact with anyone under the age of sixteen.

An audible gasp went up from those on the benches. Then the defendant's lawyer informed the judge that a new appeal was going to be made soon, and asked for a three-week stay of execution of the sentence, which would give the new attorney time to present his appeal.

The majority of the jurors believed the father to be innocent, but in the face of two who insisted he was guilty, proof or no proof, the others capitulated.

"Denied!"

The judge's gavel banged. And he turned and strode brusquely into his chambers.

The young mother collapsed in a sobbing, wailing heap. Friends tried to comfort her and struggled to lead her out of the courtroom. There were murmurs of disbelief and anger. I felt as though a softball had just slammed into the pit of my stomach. The gray-suited lawyer slumped noticeably. The DA hurriedly gathered her papers and shouldered her way out of the courtroom, ignoring one who accosted her.

We gathered in a conference room downstairs for a last few minutes with the lawyer. He had no explanation for the turn of events.

Outside in the hallway, the shaken young man said his goodbyes under the watchful eyes of a deputy sheriff. He tried to comfort his wife, who was inconsolable. Then he hugged his mother, long and hard, and sobs finally wracked his whole body.

"They told me right along that if I just told the truth I'd be OK. How did I ever end up like this? All I've ever wanted to do was be a good guy!"

"You *are* a good guy," we told him, "and don't forget that for one split-second. You're innocent. We *know* you're innocent, and now we've got to start fighting to get you out of this and get you acquitted."

Less than an hour and a half later, he had been strip searched, clothed in prison orange, and locked in a cell in the county jail with another prisoner.

Less than three days later, he was admitted to the men's correctional facility, assigned to a tiny cell with another man in on similar charges, in a cell block holding ninety prisoners. He is allowed out of his cell for one hour at a time, three times a day, during which time he is allowed a shower, shave, and use of the telephone. He is allowed visitors for one hour, once a week.

As I write this, on the weekend after that fateful Tuesday, the new attorney has not yet been able to get a judge to set bail, because the judge who pronounced the sentence is still assigned to the case even though he announced in court that he was recusing himself from it.

In the meanwhile, the prisoner's mother and I pray... and continue to

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ON THE EDGE OF A NEW CENTURY

Less than one thousand days remain in the twentieth century. Christians in Canada and the United States face a dramatically different world than did our Christian forebears who witnessed the end of the nineteenth century.

What should be our priorities as we stand on the edge of a new century (and a new millennium)? We asked five Advent Christians to respond to that question and we hope their responses will trigger you to think about how you and your church will address the opportunities and the problems a new century will bring.

PRACTICE CHRISTIAN LOVE

Ronald S. Bezanson
Kaneohi, Hawaii

AS CHRISTIANS living in these closing years of the 20th century, we would all do well to heed and practice the timeless law of love as exemplified in the life and teachings of Jesus nearly 2000 years ago. We must love God and love one another—letting love be the measure and guide of both our words and our actions.

We live in a "post-Christian society." Many of our contemporaries believe that the ancient teachings of an itinerant preacher in a far off land are somehow irrelevant in today's world. But I say to you, Christ's message and example provide the only formula for true success and happiness. We disregard it at our peril. John Stott, in his book, *The Contemporary Christian*, indicates that "The adjectives 'historical' and 'contemporary' are not incompatible"...we must live "in the 'now' in the light of the 'then.'" Because God in Christ purchased our salvation, we must reflect his love in our living. If our society has somehow become "post-Christian," perhaps it is because we have failed to take seriously our commission to be the voice, the hands, and the feet of God's love. Perhaps we have allowed ourselves to become a part of the problem rather than helping to define or implement the solution.

If our society has somehow become "post-Christian," perhaps it is because we have failed to take seriously our commission to be the voice, the hands, and the feet of God's love.

God is love. If we are to reflect that love we must be in communion and fellowship with him. This

means opening ourselves to God in Bible reading and prayer, waiting and listening for his direction. It means joining together in the fellowship of other Christians to worship, to learn, and to grow.

Love is action. Not only do we receive love from God, we love in return our God, and our neighbors as ourselves. Annie Johnson Flint, in a poem entitled, *The World's Bible*, has written, "Christ has no hands but our hands to do his work today..." Later in the same poem she declares, "We are the only Bible the careless world will read; we are the sinner's gospel, we are the scoffer's creed..." What does society see in our attitudes and behavior? Our responsibility is clear, and as Jesus said, "Inasmuch as you love the least of these, you show your love to me." Notice that the word is love, not shun, not judge, not gossip about, not condemn, but *love*.

Scripture tells us that governmental authority has been instituted by God (Romans 13:1-7) to help preserve order in human society. As Christians we are exhorted to heed this authority, to do what is good, to pay taxes to whom taxes are due, to give respect to whom respect is due, and honor to whom honor is due. We cannot in good conscience abandon the job of governing, leaving it in the hands of unscrupulous politicians on the left or on the right who would lead us astray, striking out at any who dare disagree with them. We must get involved; we must speak out for truth and ensure by our actions that we elect men and women of integrity who will seek the common good, correct past injustice, and set a course of responsible action. We have the responsibility to follow Christ wherever he may lead and to make his love known to everyone we meet.

We cannot in good conscience abandon the job of governing, leaving it in the hands of unscrupulous politicians.

We fulfill this responsibility by speaking and acting in love. We make positive affirmation of the truth that sets us free, and thus we do our part to make Christ's gospel a relevant force for living in modern society. ❑

Ronald "Scotty" Bezanson is a retired Advent Christian military chaplain and chairman of the Advent Christian commission on armed services chaplains.

THE TEMPTATION OF POWER

Dennis Peterson
Charlotte, N.C.

TWO YEARS AGO, at a local Chinese church, I heard a man speak who was visiting from China. He was a Christian, and he told us about the persecutions his church was experiencing. They had to meet secretly under constant threat of arrest. Their pastor had been in prison for two years, and the pastor's father had been martyred. But during the past five years, the church had grown from 3,000 to 6,000.

We hear similar reports from other churches in China, including the Advent Christian congregations. We see the same story across the globe, and across history, starting with the very first Christians. When the church is persecuted, it is strong. When it has power, it is subverted by Satan. Look at the Crusades, the Inquisition, and the Roman Catholic church in the time of Luther. It happens every time. God's strength is not made perfect in power, but in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9).

There are Christians in America today who are trying to expand the political power of the church. We must ask ourselves if that is really a good idea. Philip Yancey points out in *The Jesus I Never Knew* that political power was one of the temptations of Christ. If Jesus rejected it, shouldn't we?

Other Christians question the legitimacy of our current government. But Paul said in Romans 13 that all government—not just good government—is given authority by God. We mustn't expect that government be moral, because Luke 4 says that all the governments of the world have been given to the devil. (If this seems a contradiction, read Job 1.). Don't be misled by a romanticized view of history. Governments have always been evil, as our Founding Fathers knew. The real question, for Christians, is not whether the government is legitimate, but whether it's relevant. Christ didn't try to reform Rome.

In a society, then, that seems to be disintegrating, what must we do? The starting point is to have a strong community within our churches. Jesus said, "By your love for one another, everyone will know you are my disciples" (John 13:35). Not by your modern marketing methods, nor by your correct theology, but by your love. A strong and authentic community is the foundation for everything we do as Christians. Take the time to get to know, really know, the people in your church. Be slow to judge them, forgive their transgressions against you, help them out in their times of trouble and even in their good times. Without real community, the church is dead.

Political power was one of the temptations of Christ. If Jesus rejected it, shouldn't we?

Then, reach out to the world around you. Don't bother trying to reform society. Some people like to quote 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If my people...will turn from their wicked ways...then I will heal their land." But that was a promise made to Israel, and we are under a new covenant now. Despite the rhetoric of some Christians today, the successor to Israel is not the United States, or any other nation, but the Church.

Instead, introduce people to God so he can change them from the inside. Take on the world one person at a time, just like Jesus did. Feed the hungry, look after the sick, visit the prisoners. Governments around the world have tried to eradicate poverty,

but Jesus said, "The poor will always be with you" (Mark 14:7). This gives us a great opportunity to demonstrate the love of God.

One final point. As a citizen of your country, you do have the right, and perhaps a responsibility, to get involved in politics. There's certainly nothing wrong with that, but don't imagine that by doing so you are doing a Christian ministry. If you want to promote public morality, by all means do so, but understand that this is not the Christian strategy, but a secular one, dating back at least as far as Confucius. Don't do your politics in the name of Christ, because other Christians might disagree with you (perhaps even without committing heresy). You mustn't let your political views be confused with the gospel. Never let anyone who disagrees with your politics use that as an excuse to reject Christ.

Above all, never let your political life overshadow your Christian life. In all you do, political or otherwise, live in a Christian manner with love and kindness for both friends and enemies. We cannot repair society if we do not first repair ourselves. ❑

Dennis Peterson is the graphic designer for the Advent Christian General Conference, and has a degree in cultural anthropology from the University of Virginia.

KEEPING HIS LOVE ALIVE

Joanne H. Hunter
Presque Isle, Maine

WHEN THE CHURCH was born, a handful of ordinary folks changed their pagan, hostile world, and ultimately ours, one person at a time. They were inept and inadequate, but Jesus baptized them with the Holy Spirit and gave them power to live for him and be his witnesses. He told them, "Love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength," and "love your neighbor as yourself."

Amazingly enough, that is exactly what they did. They loved God, and they loved people with the same kind of servant love that Christ had lavished on them. They became channels of his love to others by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. That is still Christ's program for building his kingdom.

God's ways often seem ridiculous to us. But as we take God's directives seriously and put them into practice in the mundane moments of our daily lives, our love for God will deepen and overflow.

The trappings of society keep changing, but human nature stays the same. The symbols and catch-phrases of Christianity shift with succeeding generations, but Christ's agenda never varies. Ministry fads come and go, but the power of the Holy Spirit to love men and women into the kingdom of God through those who submit themselves to Jesus is constant. Our God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

God's ways often seem ridiculous to us. It doesn't seem to make good sense to turn the other cheek, to love our enemies and feed them if they are hungry, to refuse to take offense at those who hurt us, to pray for God's blessings for those who persecute us. It appears foolish to rejoice in the midst of pain and heartache and to give thanks in all things. But as we take God's directives seriously and put them into practice in the mundane moments of our daily lives, our love for God will deepen and overflow into agape love for others, and Jesus Christ will become visibly alive in us.

As we invite the Holy Spirit to keep convicting us of our sins and wait obediently for the Lord Jesus to baptize us and keep refilling us with the Holy Spirit, God will produce a sense of humility in us that will stand in contrast to the pride and arrogance around us. His supernatural power will begin to show itself in our relationships and witness to others.

Simple? Yes. Easy? No. But what we cannot do in ourselves, Jesus is abundantly able to do in and through us if we don't resist him. If we simply put on a front and try to project a good image, the world will condemn us hypocrites. But if we see others as Jesus sees them, they will know our love is genuine. People today are desperate to find real love and real spiritual power. They can find them in Jesus, and we can show them how.

I believe these are the three most important things that Christians can do today: be baptized with the Holy Spirit and receive his power, love God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, and love others as we love ourselves. As we live out Christ's love in the power of his indwelling Spirit, we will see changes in ourselves and those around us, regardless of how pagan or hostile our society becomes. ❑

Joanne Hunter serves as pastor of Castle Hill, Maine, Advent Christian Church.

WILL THE CHURCH BE THE CHURCH?

Clio E. Thomas
Seattle, Wash.

HENRY CARTER, pastor and head of a small church home for emotionally disturbed children, was interrupted on Christmas Eve by a crisis in the home. Tommy had crawled under his bed and refused to come out. No part of him was visible and he didn't answer when spoken to.

Fretting at all the time this was taking from a busy schedule and preparation of his Christmas sermon,

Pastor Carter dropped on his hands and knees, lifted the spread, and looked under the bed. Two enormous blue eyes met his. Tommy was eight, but looked like a five-year-old. It would have been easy to grab him and pull him out. But, that was not what Tommy needed.

Pastor began to talk to him, telling him of all the plans for a nice Christmas Eve, the menu for supper, the singing and evening service, and the stocking with his name on it.

Silence. There was no indication that Tommy heard or cared.

At last the Pastor got down on his stomach and crawled under the bed. For what seemed like a long time he lay there with his cheek pressed against the floor still talking to Tommy. Finally he ran out of things to say, and he simply waited there beside him.

The church must know that it is the body of Jesus Christ. It is not a religious club or philanthropic institution. It is the body of Jesus Christ. It is the people of God who are set apart from the world and sent back into the world to witness and to serve.

As he waited a small hand crept into his. Taking the hand he said, "You know, Tommy, it's kind of close under here; why don't we get out where we can stand up." Slowly they did. They were in no hurry.

Jesus crawled under the bed of a confused and frightened world, reached out his hand for the people to put their hands in his.

I doubt that the needs of the 21st century will be much different from the needs of the first Century. We will be dressed in cyberspace and the Information highway, but the same old human foibles and predicaments will haunt us. Though the needs will be much the same, the ways we address those needs may be vastly changed.

Secular society offers to the church tremendous challenges and tremendous opportunities. John Stott, in his book *The Contemporary Christian*, suggests that modern secularized men and women are on a threefold quest for transcendence, for significance, and for community. The gospel message offers an answer to all three. The real question which faces us as we move toward the 21st century is whether the church will be the church and offer transcendence through its worship, significance through its teaching, and community through its fellowship.

Stott suggests three things which the church must be and do. First, it must understand itself. The church must know that it is the body of Jesus Christ. It is not a religious club or philanthropic institution. It is the body of Jesus Christ. It is the people of God who are set apart from the world and sent back into the world to witness and to serve.

Then the church must organize itself. The structures of the church (the way it is organized) must express its theology. The nature and mission of the church must determine its structure—not the other way around. All too often structure determines missions, or worse yet, the lack of it. Archbishop William Temple once said that a church which is not missionary in outlook is a caricature of the church. The church must know the Bible like a prophet and the world like a statesman. The church must bring those two together, and it must be organized in the best ways to do that very thing.

Finally, Stott suggests that the church must be itself. The church is God's new society, the living out of the gospel message it espouses. The church is the visible sign of the kingdom of God, a demonstration of what a human community looks like when it comes under the rulership of God. That is why Francis Schaeffer said that the mark of the Christian is the keeping of the command of Jesus to "love one another." It is by this that the world will know that we are his disciples. There is no other way.

A church that gets off center and begins to push dogma, knit-picking theological ideas, and neglects to love and to care will be a poor witness to its Lord.

It all gets back to living by faith. What we are all about is God's doing—not our own. As his people we must: know who we are—Christ's body, organize to deploy ourselves effectively, and be true to Jesus Christ. The church must be like its Lord.

Then we can crawl under the bed and reach out a hand to the lonely and frightened people of our age. ❑

Clio Thomas is pastor of the West Valley Advent Christian Church in Auburn, Washington.

BACK TO GREAT COMMISSION BASICS

David Ross
Charlotte, N.C.

"THE FUTURE belongs to the learning, not necessarily the learned." Hearing these words recently during a presentation by Euene Habecker, president of the American Bible Society, reminded me of the constant challenge before us as Christians on the verge of the twenty-first century. Our culture is changing so rapidly that finding practical means of keeping on the cutting edge in communicating practically the gospel message seems like trying to hit a moving target! So what should be our priorities if we are to succeed?

Three timeless, yet never more timely, disciplines come to mind: First, *a commitment to prayer*. When the Apostle Paul admonished his young disciple Timothy, 'I urge you to pray' (1 Timothy 2:1), he was echoing the sentiments of the Master himself ('Pray the Lord of the harvest,' Matthew 9:38). The number one strategy of the believer individually, and of

the church corporately, in reaching our world is fervent prayer. Without such prayer, we cannot hope to succeed. Yet it remains an oft-neglected discipline. How futile and foolish to allow pursuit of other good ministry strategies to crowd out adequate time and energy for the one discipline which empowers the rest!

A few years ago, as part of an academic project, I surveyed the pastors of a particular conference of over thirty Advent Christian churches to determine what specific factor or factors were most consistently evident in growing congregations. Was it a matter of location (urban, suburban, rural, growing population area)? Was it the pastor's educational level, or longevity in that pastorate, or age? Was it a matter of some mysterious demographic mix? Actually, the results shouldn't have been so startling to me, yet they were. By far the most dominant characteristic of the growing churches was the commitment to personal prayer (in terms of daily time invested) on the part of the pastor. I should hasten to add that this characteristic was likely evident among several other congregational leaders in the churches as well. But the bottom line is that sustained growth, both personally and in terms of church outreach into society, is a product of prayer.

The bottom line is that sustained growth, both personally and in terms of church outreach into society, is a product of prayer.

Next, *a commitment to the Bible.* Recently I heard a noted pollster comment, "Most American evangelicals believe the Bible, but they have very little idea what it actually says!" A panel of religious media recently named, "Increasing Biblical Illiteracy Rates Among Evangelical Christians" as one of the most prominent trends as we prepare to enter a new millennium. I participate on the board of a Bible school that routinely administers to entering students a standardized test used by Bible colleges to measure accumulated biblical knowledge. Over the past decade we've watched the entrance scores drop appreciably year after year. What our young people are not learning concerning the basics of Scripture, either in the home or in the church, is alarming!

So what can be done? I believe the most powerful teaching will be done by example. We as Christian leaders in the home and church must be committed not only to respecting the Word of God, but to applying ourselves to learning and living it! Nothing will impact a drifting, relativistic society more than the joyful and confident witness of lives based upon absolute, biblical truth. But we must study and know the truth before we can powerfully live it.

Finally, *a commitment to Great Commission obedience.* We still learn best by example. Our Lord Jesus came among us and lived a life of obedience to the Father. He showed how it was done, then promised to supply the power to do it. And his basic assignment given to those who followed him was to make disciples (see Matthew 28:16-20). "Reproduce what you've learned from Me in the lives of others, whose lives in turn will impact yet others," he instructed.

This is how every society which the church has touched throughout history has been impacted. It remains God's plan for the church today. Example is a powerful teacher. The apostle Paul often told his hearers, "Follow me as I follow Christ." The world will be changed eternally for Christ one by one, individual by individual, through intentional, consistent disciple-making. Are you willing to become such a change-agent?

The Advent Christian Church at the end of this twentieth century is making an unmistakable recommitment to Great Commission obedience. As one example of this, the *Walking as Jesus Walked* Sunday-school curriculum recently produced by our own writers has been the most widely utilized in many, many years. Our renewed Great Commission commitment is revolutionizing our world mission interest and outreach. In the 1990s alone the number of Advent Christian mission fields has doubled.

Have you, and your congregation, committed to these basic disciplines of prayer, Bible-learning, and disciple-making? If so, you will make an eternal difference in your community, and in your world! ❑

David Ross served for eighteen years as pastor of State Road Advent Christian Church in Presque Isle, Maine before becoming Executive Director of the Advent Christian General Conference.

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While in Hong Kong, I spent an afternoon with an exiled dissident from Tiananmin Square. His life will be in severe danger because of the takeover. Shouldn't we use the granting of Most Favored Nation status as a bargaining chip with the communists in exchange for freedom for such dissidents who dare to defy totalitarianism? Shouldn't we demand some real freedom of religion in China in exchange for the financial bonanza it is about to receive from us?

Gary Bauer and I don't always agree on public policy, but I am behind him when he calls for a rejection of the Most Favored Nation status for China, unless there is some reciprocation with human rights concessions. Bauer contends that economic considerations should not obliterate moral considerations when it comes to national policy. He's right! It is time for Christians of every political persuasion to join together and oppose MFN status for China. Making human rights more important than cutting a deal that helps big business should be something that all Christians, regardless of party affiliation, can make a matter of agreement.

Hong Kong as a British colony has come to an end. Christians everywhere should be asking what can be achieved for God's Kingdom in the communist takeover. ❑

On Trial

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hurt... and pray harder. And we hold this young man out to God on open palms, refusing to snatch him back, with the earnest prayer that, like many others, his time in jail will be redeemed when he meets the Redeemer personally, and receives him to himself. And we remind each other once more that our Savior always has eternity's values in view.

We will stand before a righteous judge

As I mull over these events from the past six days, I am reminded that, one of these days, every person who ever lived will stand before the great and righteous Judge of the universe. As the books are opened, the accuser of the brethren will step forward to charge each of us with every sin we have ever committed.

In this court there will be no one who is innocent. Satan's accusations will be all too true. And each of us will *know*, with a sickening inner certainty, that we are indeed guilty as charged.

Those who have never been redeemed will find themselves alone, terrifyingly alone, as they wait for the sentence to be pronounced against them. There will be no bail, no parole, no mitigating circumstances to soften the sentence. It will be a sentence of death, to be paid immediately. As the guilty are cast into the lake of fire, there will be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. And this will be the second death.

How totally, terrifyingly lonely. How horrifyingly inevitable. How terribly, terribly sad. How wastefully unnecessary. For all of us who have committed ourselves to Jesus will have an advocate with the Judge: the Lord Jesus himself. And even as we admit our guilt, and hear the inevitable sentence, we will also hear the One who stands beside us speak words that tremble with joy: "If it pleases the court, the sentence has already been served!"

Miracle of miracles, we are declared innocent! We have been justified by the holy blood of Jesus, which was shed for the forgiveness of sin. The Lord himself interceded for us with the Father, having paid the penalty for our sin in his own flesh on the cross of Calvary. He suffered and died alone, so that we might be declared not guilty. We have been set free, both for time and for eternity.

How incredibly great is God's grace to us.

NOTE: This young man was released on bail the Friday after Christmas, exactly three weeks after arriving at a state correctional facility, to await a decision by the state Supreme Court on an appeal for a retrial. The appeal was denied. He is currently back in prison hoping that a final appeal for a new trial might be granted. His only other chance to be released and allowed to live with his children is the very slim possibility of a governor's pardon. We continue to pray that he will make that ultimate commitment to Christ that will make the difference for him, regardless of the outcome, and would covet your prayers to this end as well. ❑

The author is an Advent Christian pastor.

Editorial

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Finally, be intentional. God has given us an awesome responsibility of communicating his love and grace to others with whom we come in contact. I hope your congregation is thinking about how you're going to communicate the good news of God's love to people who don't know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. I hope your church is thinking about ways that you can intentionally disciple the new Christians for whom God will give you an opportunity to care. Advent Christians have talked much about disciplemaking during the 1990s. But I'm convinced we still have much to learn and do. Evangelism and discipleship do not simply happen. They are ministries that grow out of people who know God personally, who are willing to cultivate an attitude of forgiveness and openness toward others, and who are willing to intentionally think about and plan for ways to touch people at their level of spiritual need.

I've had the privilege of meeting many of you and I appreciate your words of grace, encouragement, and challenge. While serving in this capacity has involved writing, editing, and dealing with production scheduled, the best part of the past fifteen years has been meeting and working with Advent Christian people throughout Canada and the United States. I pray that the best days for the Advent Christian Church, its people, and its local churches, still lie in the future.

I love the Apostle Paul's first prayer for the church at Philippi and as I think about you, his prayer is mine: "I thank God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." May you know the joy of God's grace as you follow Jesus. ❑

Questions and Answers
with Edward Fudge

A preacher objects to my saying that fallen human beings are dead spiritually because of sin and are unable to repent and believe without God's gracious supernatural enabling. "This is a human doctrine," he claims, which "smacks of Calvinism and is not biblical." Besides, he argues, God commands repentance and faith, so humans must be able to do them.

Those who do not take sin seriously will never be able to take seriously the divine grace which delivers us from sin. Until we know our own helplessness and inability to climb up to God, we will never appreciate God's coming down to us in the incarnation, his descent into hades in Christ's death, and the incomparable power which God demonstrated when he raised Jesus up from among the dead ones.



But don't take my word for it—hear the apostle Paul. Because of Adam's sin, he states point-blank:

"The many died" (Rom. 5:15),

"judgment arose resulting in condemnation" (5:16),

"death reigned" (5:17),

"there resulted condemnation to all men" (5:18), and

"the many were made sinners" (5:19).

All that, Paul's original Jewish audience already knew and believed. What they did not already know was the *good news* that Jesus of Nazareth came as the "second Adam," the second representative man, and that by his perfect doing and dying in our name and stead, he won back for us far more than the first Adam lost. And at least two New Testament writers say that God gives repentance (Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25). Both of them lived some 1,500 years before John Calvin was even born.

God often commands what is humanly impossible, then enables what he has commanded. "Walk across the Jordan," he told the Israelites. Then he opened the river so they could do just that. "Lazarus, come forth!" Jesus commanded a corpse—but he enabled what he commanded. So it is when God commands people who are "dead in trespasses and sin" to repent and believe the gospel. He commands what is humanly impossible—then he enables what he commands.

It is time for us to take our doctrine from a positive reading of Scripture rather than by preaching against perceived "bugaboos" such as "Calvinism"—or any other dismissive label one might pick. When we do that, we find that those other Christians outside our own circles discovered some truths before we did, and that they found some we have not yet discovered. It goes without saying that we have something to share with them as well—and they will listen to us when we get off our pedestals and confess that we are also sinners saved by grace, struggling down here on the ground to learn God's will better and to follow Jesus the only Savior.

A preaching brother whose small child has cerebral palsy writes in tears, saying that he believes God is able to heal but that he is almost afraid to believe that God will heal his little son, lest such confidence, if unfulfilled, might threaten his faith. He also fears that some will question his ability to preach and teach Jesus because of his perceived lack of faith that God will heal his child.

My dear brother—anyone who "doubts" you or "judges" you or "accuses" you or puts any "guilt" on you in this matter is, in my humble opinion, ignorant of scriptural teaching, confused about the character of God, insensitive, misled, and in need of your prayers.

When you watch your dear sons, or call to them to come to you, you do so fully aware of their capabilities and without any heart of judgment, but only of a father's love who longs to see them fulfill their best potential and, most of all, to be near you and with you and to exchange the love of their hearts with your own father's heart.

Our heavenly Father, says Jesus, is not only as good a parent as we are but infinitely better than any of us. We see his heart, as applied to individual people, in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. He does not break a bruised reed or extinguish a smoking wick. He runs to meet even the prodigal son whose face is set toward home. He forgives those who crucify him.

How much more does he forgive any residual unbelief which he sees in all of us at our best, when he also sees that the desire of our hearts is to trust him, to be with him, to love him as we can in return for his great love. How he embraces you in your obvious faith, and how he mourns with you in your sadness today!

God will perfectly heal your son one day, dear brother, when we see Jesus face to face. That will not be a dislocated event unrelated to anything else, but rather the fulfillment of his creation purpose, a purpose thwarted temporarily by human sin since Adam, but a purpose set back on track by the victorious life, death, and resurrection of his son, Jesus Christ. The resurrection will be, in short, the consummation of the accomplishment of Christ's atonement. God will be victorious over sin and all its effects—in a tangible, cosmic, universal, visible manner!

In the meantime, the Father and the Risen Jesus are among us by the Holy Spirit, who came in Jesus' bodily absence on Pentecost, to remain with his people until the end. In the Father's kindness and sovereignty, he bestows visible tokens of his victory even now from time to time in the form of healings, both partial and complete, both instantaneous and gradual, through prayer alone and through prayer with medicine or surgery or therapy. But it all is from God. We do not understand how God heals (even through medicine, which can only speed up or slow down what goes on in the body already), or why he heals some but not others, or why partially and not completely. But we can hope with confidence in his love—certain that he will heal completely at the end, and that the same Jesus who touched and healed the sick when walking in Palestine 2,000 years ago has the same power today.

So we ask. And ask again. And keep on asking. And know that he loves us infinitely, however he chooses to heal, and whether now or later. And that he will be with us, by his presence in the Holy Spirit, to fill us with joy and peace in believing. That no one who reaches out to God in faith is rebuffed by him. That even when he says "later," he hugs us close as we wait.

Woe to anyone who makes presumptuous promises as to what God will do! God is Sovereign, and he will do what he will. Meanwhile, let us draw near to God in full assurance of faith, for he is faithful who promised. Let us ask, lest we receive not for not asking. We may know that wherever love is, in God's power and in Jesus' name, there is "healing"—whether of one sort or another.

The wounded God, who in Christ was beaten to a bloody pulp and nailed to a tree and left until he died, feels our pain. He weeps with us and holds us close as we wait for the final day of consummate victory over every ill that has befallen our broken and groaning world. This is the good news of the gospel and we may know that it is true.

I understand that you are an elder and preacher in the Church of Christ, but you have mentioned the Advent Christian Church several times. I have never heard of that group. Would you please tell me something about them?

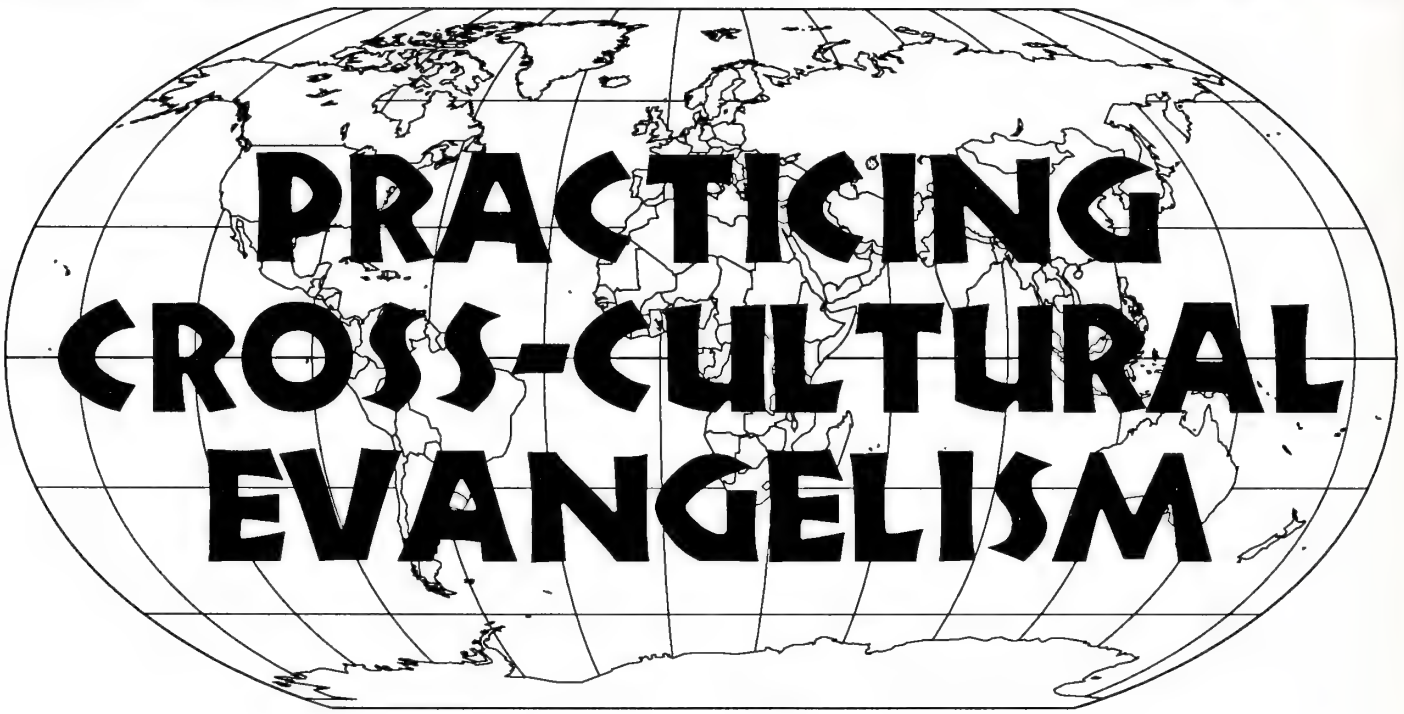
I first met the Advent Christians after the 1982 publication of my book titled *The Fire That Consumes*, a painstakingly-thorough investigation of the biblical doctrine of final punishment. My conclusion there that the wicked will be destroyed both body and soul in the second death (hell) happened to confirm what Advent Christians have taught for 125+ years, and they quickly claimed the book as an "outside" source of support for their long-cherished but often-maligned position.

The Advent Christian folk are the Sunday-meeting descendants of the William Miller "Adventual" revival of the mid-19th century which also spawned the larger and better-known Seventh-day Adventists. Almost all that I have met are warm-hearted, Bible-minded, and Christ-centered. (Few people are aware of the fact that the William Miller revival of the mid-1800s was responsible for awakening American and British Christians of all denominations to the reality that Jesus can return at any moment. Before Miller's preaching, it was commonly thought that Jesus would not return until *after* the millennium, which Alexander Campbell, for example, believed would be ushered in by the conversion of the entire world to Christ.)

Advent Christian doctrinal emphases are solidly evangelical. They also stress (as I believe Scripture does, though, unfortunately, not most evangelicals) the natural mortality of humanity and "life only in Christ" as well as the eternal destruction of the lost. They teach a cosmic eschatology of new heavens and new earth and rather than an individual emphasis on "going to heaven" (which they correctly note is non-biblical), the kingdom of God (not dispensational, some are historic premillennial, many are not). They have a great variety of thinking as to classic issues (Reformed/Arminian, charismatic/non-charismatic, etc.) and are quite tolerant with each other over those differences.

Their churches range in style from classic fundamentalist to very seeker-oriented, church-growth models. They have regional superintendents (several I know personally) who are spiritual bishops with pastoral hearts but only moral authority; and churches have much freedom vis-a-vis the denomination. Advent Christians baptize believers by immersion, stress a lively piety of life, and are out there trying to be Christians and win souls for Christ. As one from an *a cappella* church tradition, I have en-

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PRACTICING CROSS-CULTURAL EVANGELISM

Jeff Vann
Cagayon De Oro, Philippines

CROSS-CULTURAL evangelism is something that every Christian can be involved in. Most of us, however, seem to have a natural reluctance to being involved in this ministry. That reluctance is partly due to our fear of evangelism in general. We might have run across a person who tried to "force salvation down someone's throat" before, and been turned off by that method. We may be intimidated by the presence of those who do not believe as we do, fearing rejection. Or we may have doubts and fears about our own understanding of the Christian faith that makes us put off outreach until some unknown future date. The trouble is, the future date never seems to come. Very few believers actively witness on a regular basis.

And when it comes to cross-cultural evangelism (reaching out to people who are different from us), we have extra barriers to overcome. In addition to our own feelings of insecurity, we have to deal with cultural, ethnic, and language barriers.

Most Americans choose to not get involved in any cross-cultural evangelistic work. It is much easier to leave such work to professional missionaries. After all, people like Penny and myself are trained to bridge cultural, ethnic, and language barriers. But the Great Commission was not just given to trained professionals, it was given to all followers of Jesus. We don't have a good track record in this, but it is obvious that God wants us all to reach out to our neighbors who are different from us.

What is the underlying cause of this failure to reach out? If we really believed that God's plan for reaching the lost works, then we would try to implement that plan more often. Perhaps we need to be reminded that God knows what he is doing when he sends us out to tell of his greatness. The story of Jonah's ministry to the Ninevites that we read in Jonah 3:1-10 is one of those reminders.

God wants us all to reach out to our neighbors who are different from us.

You might recall that Jonah had just been rescued from the belly of the great fish. After coming to the conclusion that "Salvation is of the LORD" (2:9), Jonah was completely out of doubts and excuses. He was ready to obey God's call to evangelize cross-culturally.

You might also remember that, immediately after this section, Jonah became angry because he knew that God had intended to save the Ninevites. God had to explain that Jonah was sent out on the basis of God's grace and compassion, not his own. The book of Jonah was a rebuke to Israel for not obeying the evangelistic mandate to declare God's greatness and judgment to all nations.

Jonah responded to God in determined obedience.

There is a principle to remember here: God's evangelistic call for the believer involves both immediate and progressive obedience. God called Jonah first to arise, then to go (walk), then to preach. At any point Jonah

could have (and did at first) try to escape the responsibilities of further obedience.

We live in an age of choice among multiple options. Each individual decides the level of his own commitment to, or response to, pleas or challenges. For example, although many have the opportunity to pursue higher education fewer respond to that opportunity than in Japanese culture, where education is regarded more highly.

God's call is more than a choice for believers. It is a responsibility. Christians should determine to follow God's call on their lives to the limits of their ability, and perhaps a bit beyond. For example, those who feel gifted in the area of preaching should continually seek to develop the gift by means of education and feedback from hearers.

But each of us can respond to the call to evangelize people who are different from us by making friends with those of differing ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Here are some suggestions to keep in mind as you try to establish friendships with people who are different from you: 1. Try to look at life from your friend's perspective; 2. Practice the art of curiosity; 3. Ask good questions. How do I know if a question is good? If the question is about something that interests you, then it is probably good. The question should be open-ended, not one that you already know the answer before you ask it. The question should be relatively easy to answer. Don't ask a question that might make your friend uncomfortable. Find out what your friend wants to talk about, and pursue it.

Remember that the goal is to build a relationship. The friendship you build may take time, but it is a necessary ingredient in the process of evangelizing across cultural barriers. Once the relationship is established it will give us access so that we can share our message.

The Ninevites responded to Jonah's message with humble repentance

Typical evangelistic meetings often focus on personal sins and avoid the sins of national and social structure. Jonah's message showed how each lost person in Nineveh participated in the sins of Nineveh, and thus called for both personal and nationwide repentance. Perhaps a message that calls for repentance for the sins of one's nation and a call for nationwide repentance could be stressed in our evangelistic meetings—without excluding the individual aspect.

Did you notice that when the people proclaimed a fast, the king followed. The people didn't wait for the king to decide. National repentance will never be initiated by the courts, but always starts in the hearts of ordinary people touched by God. I realize that politician-blasting is one of America's favorite indoor sports, but perhaps we need to be corrected in this area. Instead of blaming our political leaders for the problems caused by spiritual evils, we should set an example for them of humble repentance and concern.

God responded to the Ninevites with redeeming grace

Another principle to remember from this passage is: Never preach judgment as if God wants to judge. God always wants to redeem and forgive, not condemn. God wants us to preach judgment because he has compassion on those headed for the fires of hell.

Have you noticed that when some terrible natural disaster happens, insurance companies refer to it as an "act of God?" While it is true that God is sovereign over all the events on earth, these disasters should not be singled out, as God's way of getting back at us. Natural disasters are times to exhibit God's compassion upon victims. But when people are complacent in their sin, the message of impending consequences must be preached with the kind of love God expressed to the Ninevites.

When Jonah responded properly to God's evangelistic mandate, the Ninevites responded in obedience and humble repentance. God, in turn, responded with redeeming grace. This wonderful passage of Scripture reminds us that God knows what he is doing when he calls us to preach to the lost. He has a plan. That plan involves our submissive obedience, coupled with the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit. His plan results in people being saved and incorporated into the body of Christ. We need to trust his plan. We need to declare God's greatness and glory to the nations. We need to start next door. Yes, next door, or across town, where the people are a little different from us. ❑

Advent Christian missionary Jeff Vann trained for missionary service at Berkshire Christian College and Columbia International University. He and his wife, Penny, serve at Oro Bible College in the Philippines.

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joyed their vigorous congregational singing, which they do quite well even with instrumental accompaniment.

For fifteen years I have been privileged to speak at numerous Advent Christian churches, regional and national conferences from coast-to-coast, and I now count many wonderful and dear Christian friends among these gentle and humble people. They seem to flourish on the coasts—East and West—but are not widely known between. If you should happen to encounter an Advent Christian pastor or church, I invite you to get to know them. You will probably enjoy some good Christian fellowship. ❑

Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant

A Parable to Commemorate 100 Years of WHFMS

Hazel Blackstone
Bangor, Maine

IT WAS A typical day in a small coastal Maine community. The lobstermen were up before the crack of dawn to begin hauling their traps, not intimidated by the early morning fog. By mid-morning the sun had burned off the mist and from all appearances it looked like another beautiful July day. Most of the townspeople remained unaware of the event about to unfold.

There was nothing particularly flashy about the birth—the usual labor pains, but no vanguard or trumpets heralding the event. But to a small group gathered in the modest whit-framed house there was hushed anticipation as they awaited the announcement. And when it came, the long anxiety-ridden hours were forgotten. Pure delight replaced nervous murmurings. One by one each took a turn holding the newborn baby and uttered prophetic pronouncements concerning her future.

"She's a beautiful child with so much promise!" declared one.

"God will bless her and use her mightily," maintained another.

"She will be a modern day Dorcas, sensing the needs of others and serving with the resources available to her," prophesied a third.

"Lord, give her a zeal for lost souls," prayed one misty-eyed saint.

"May her ministry be far-reaching, extending to many parts of the earth," toasted another.

Immediately the caregivers set to the task of nurturing the little one entrusted to them.

And grow, she did, by leaps and bounds. In her first year she made token appearances in fifteen states and three Canadian provinces. All who got a glimpse of her were drawn to this winsome infant. As excitement about the baby spread, churches rushed to become caregivers and help wherever possible.

As the babe grew into childhood, her altruistic leanings became more pronounced. She communed closely with her heavenly Father and prayed for him to use her where needed to encourage others and further the cause of Christ. Her spiritual gifts became obvious—particularly the gifts of giving, service, and encouragement. She began to see with her heart instead of just her eyes. Even at her tender age her heart broke with the vast array of needs left unmet. She campaigned for challenges that many winced at. But no project or job dissuaded her child-like faith. Undertakings deemed too costly or outrageous by naysayers were realized by her dedicated, resourceful and energetic efforts.

- She rented and furnished a "Home" for the Boston Bible School (now Berkshire Christian College).
- The country of India particularly left an indelible mark upon her conscience during her visits there. Unable to shake the images of poverty from her mind she assumed total support of the mission and assisted in other ways to help Advent Christian work grow there.
- She raised money to provide a Mission Room at Aurora College, in Illinois.
- She assumed a share in the support of Dowling Park Home and Orphanage (now Advent Christian Village), in Dowling Park, Florida.

As she matured she became concerned for children and encouraged mission education at their level. She wrote material published for use in Advent Christian Sunday schools. Auxiliaries were formulated to aid in training children and teens—specifically King's Jewels, Milows (later Junior Action), and Young Women's Auxiliaries.

Gradually this modern-day Dorcas reached middle age, but her enthusiasm didn't wane. She saw new opportunities in her beloved homeland. Recognizing the mission challenges in the U.S. she financed qualified women to work in home mission areas.

As the years passed, her influence broadened. Many regions around the world felt her influence. Japan. India. Philippines. Malaysia. Mexico. China. Children were schooled, families won to Christ, sick and diseased people nursed back to health, and farming principles taught to strengthen fledgling economies and provide needed

food. She offered encouragement to missionaries through intercessory prayer bands, notes, cards, care packages, monetary gifts at Christmas and a newly-renovated home for retiring missionaries. When "mercy personified" learned of a need she quickly attended to it, whether it was tediously cutting and rolling bandages, collecting pill bottles, or cutting and recycling used greeting cards for stationery or pretty pictures to hand out to eager children's hands.

At home she delivered diapers, toys and clothing to impoverished inner-city Advent Christian church plants. Her touches were also felt at the Home and Orphanage facility at Dowling Park, Vernon Home, and our educational institutions—Aurora University and Berkshire Christian College. These were her glory days and a heightened spirit of cooperation permeated women's groups across the country. In local communities crisis pregnancy clinics, burned-out victims, shelters for women, church renovation projects, aging and terminal patients facing insurmountable medical expenses all benefited from the generosity of this mercy giver.

Her profound effect with children was realized as teens trained in the auxiliary groups caught her vision and enlisted in summer missions teams, or became missionaries as adults.

Old age eventually set in and the mercy giver faced a milestone in her life—her one-hundredth birthday. Plans to celebrate her years of service and accomplishments were set in motion by her followers around the country. But with the festivities, her caregivers faced another dilemma. They sat down together on April 10, 1997, at the Charlotte, North Carolina offices to discuss the issue.

"You've had opportunity now to look at her charts. I'm interested in hearing your reactions," began the lead caregiver.

"Well, it's obvious that she's declining physically. Her vitals are dropping. How should we interpret these numbers?" voiced one.

"I don't know. Our culture is changing. Age isn't as attractive as youth. Other things crowd in and distract our constituents from the focus of her ministry. Time is a precious commodity these days. Families face increasing pressures. Where this is all leading I'm not sure."

Comments continued as another concerned caregiver spoke up. "Numbers in our children's auxiliaries are slipping, too. Volunteer leaders are hard to find. Besides, mission education is not a priority in the typical Christian family. What do we do?

"Do we pull the life support and let her die of natural causes?" queried the leader, watching carefully the reactions on the somber faces before her.

The room fell silent for a moment as each person felt the impact of the question and contemplated the ramifications of such a decision.

"But her heart is still strong. She is a faithful steward

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Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E

S E E K

K N O W

October

1 Praise God for his protective care for Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** on his two recent overseas trips.

2 Pray for **Rev. Patterson** as he provides leadership, administration, and oversight for the work of Advent Christian missions throughout the world.

3 Praise God for the effective ministry of Philippine missionary **David Vignali** in working with several Teen Missions teams in that country.

4 Pray that God's Spirit will be felt by the over one million men gathered in Washington D.C., for **Promise Keepers'** solemn assembly of prayer and repentance.

5 Praise God for the ministry of **Dr. Gordon Isaac**, the Berkshire professor for Advent Christian Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

6 Pray that God will give wisdom and strength to **Steve Hughes** in his dual role as director of Oro Bible College and as an agricultural missionary in the Philippines.

7 Praise God for students at **Oro Bible College** who have committed their lives to Christian service.

8 Pray that God will use **Jeff and Penny Vann** in their teaching and interaction with Advent Christian students and pastors in the Philippines.

9 Praise God for the upcoming one-hundredth anniversary celebration of Advent Christian ministry in **Japan**.

10 Pray that God will give **Japanese** Advent Christians wisdom and courage as they seek to communicate the Christian faith to their fellow citizens.

11 Praise God for the lives touched for Jesus Christ by Living Water Advent Christian Church in **Memphis, Tennessee**.

12 Pray for **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** as they provide pastoral leadership and direction for the congregation in Memphis.

13 Praise God for the opportunities that Urban/Ethnic Ministries Coordinator **John Roller** has had to consult with Advent Christian urban and ethnic pastors in the United States.

14 Pray that God will provide his grace and strength

to pastors of Advent Christian **urban and ethnic** congregations in the United States.

15 Praise God for the **many lives** being touched for Jesus Christ through the ministry of Advent Christian World Missions during 1997.

16 Pray that **BethAnn Lay**, daughter of Japan missionaries Steven and Ann Lay, will experience God's healing touch as she continues to face a serious illness.

17 Praise God for the lives being touched for Jesus Christ through the ministry of Pastor **Amos Gbaa** in Ghana.

18 Pray for followers of Christ in **Liberia** who continue to face physical hardship as that nation attempts to recover from civil war.

19 Praise God for the partnership of the **New Zealand** Conditional Immortality Association with the ministry of Advent Christian World Missions.

20 Pray for New Zealand missionaries **Russell and Noelle Carle** as they serve the Takanini Church of Christ, Life and Advent, and organize efforts for Advent Christian church planting in that country.

21 Praise God for the effective ministry and leadership that **Marion Damon** and **Barbara White** continue to provide for the work of Advent Christian missions in India.

22 Pray that God will raise up Advent Christians to serve on mission fields in **India**, **Honduras**, and the **Philippines**.

23 Praise God for the opportunity that Advent Christian urban and ethnic pastors will have to gather in Los Angeles during the next several days for the North American Advent Christian **Urban Pastor's Clinic**.

24 Pray that God's presence will be felt by urban and ethnic Advent Christian pastors as they meet today in **Los Angeles**.

25 Praise God for the leadership that **Gell Knight** is providing for the School of Evangelism in Kodaikanal, India.

26 Pray that God will actively work in several difficult situations facing our older Advent Christian conference in **India**.

27 Praise God for the growing ministry of the Advent Christian Church in Zagreb, Croatia, led by Pastor **Desire Ahola**.

28 Pray that God will use **Pastor Ahola** and the congregation to proclaim the good news of God's love in a powerful way.

29 Praise God for the generous support of Advent Christian people through the **Penny Crusade** and **Day of Labor for the Lord** campaigns.

30 Pray that God will supply for the needs of Advent Christian ministries that depend on **United Ministries** for their income.

31 Praise God for his **grace** expressed through Jesus Christ.

Well Done continued from page 17

of all her resources. The magnitude of her relentless support in prayer, encouragement and giving are incomprehensible. Physically she may be smaller, but in no way should she be put in a nursing home. Her mind is coherent, her vision, practically 20/20 and her fortitude, remarkable. I still see some good years ahead for her."

"I agree," piped in another. "She's a faithful servant and just as determined as ever to keep making a difference. Perhaps we need to be more vigilant in telling her story and spreading the news of God's faithfulness to her. God has blessed her life and used her in turn to bless others."

The leader spoke, "Your comments remind me of something I just read in a book by Dr. John Gilmore. He said, 'We ask ourselves if God can do anything through us when we pass into old age. The answer from God is that He can accomplish His purposes through those who we and others think are washed up and worn out.' Remember Irving Berlin? He lived to the age of 101 and never stopped making music. The aging composer once said: 'The question is, are you going to be a crabby old man or are you going to write another song?' "

Silence reigned in the room as each pondered the words just spoken.

"I move we let her write another song of service to our Lord. This will be a refueling point for her as she gears up for the challenges in the 21st century. Let's be supportive of her and be faithful servants until our Lord returns!"

In an act signifying unity the group joined hands and lifted their eyes toward heaven asking God's blessing upon the graying saint in their care. Together they renewed their allegiance to her and her mission of service.

"Then the King will say to those on his right. 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.' "

Matthew 25:34-40

Hazel Blackstone is national president of the Woman's Home and Foreign Missions Society. She first presented this at the Eastern Region WHFMS fiftieth anniversary celebration at Alton Bay, New Hampshire.

Tony Campolo

The Hong Kong Takeover and the Church

I JUST returned from Hong Kong and my mind is spinning with the images and impressions I gathered there. If there is a need to prove the success of capitalism, that need can be met on the streets of this former royal colony. The blinding neon lights that seem to be hanging everywhere over the crowded streets attest to the role of advertising in this fierce market society. The BMWs and the Mercedes that dominate the traffic are evidence that there is big money in town. And the hundreds of **soaring** apartment buildings provide ample testimony to the ingenuity of a people who, in just a couple of decades, have figured out how to house 6.5 million people. Ironically, this citadel of capitalism was taken over by Communist China, on July 1.

As I came away from Hong Kong, I was somewhat troubled. I found that the churches of the colony are mostly pastored by young ministers in their twenties or early thirties. Many of the older church leaders have left to avoid the consequences of the communist takeover. They are shepherds who have abandoned their flocks in the face of impending danger, and the Bible has something to say about shepherds like that.

Another troubling sign is that the mainline churches of Hong Kong show signs of having been **seduced** by the affluence of the colony, and of having lost their zeal for evangelism. Non-traditional churches are also a cause for concern. For instance, Pentecostal churches seem to have bought into a prosperity theology. I found these Pentecostal Christians very difficult to figure out, since they know that just a few miles across the border were millions of Christians reduced to poverty because of their faithfulness to Christ. I often asked, "If faithfulness to Christ makes people rich, then how come the Christians in Red China are so poor?" Perhaps these churches need the challenges that will come with the communist takeover and their new relationship with the Christians on the other side of the bamboo curtain. What will it be like for them to suddenly be connected with the underground church in Communist China that, in just three decades, has grown from 900,000 to 30 million? What will the churches of Hong Kong learn from those Christians across the border whose faith has been greatly strengthened in the face of government oppression?

What especially disturbed me about the churches of Hong Kong was the extent to which their people had reduced the Gospel to an individualistic salvation that was weak on issues of social justice. As a case in point, I was extremely upset to find that there are about 150,000 Filipino maids in Hong Kong who experience **incredible** racial discrimination and scandalous sexual harassment from their employers—many of them "Christians." The church leaders in Hong Kong have had little say against these social injustices, and have done almost nothing to change the laws to provide protection for these Filipino maids.

On the last Sunday I was in Hong Kong I preached at a Filipino congregation. It was one of the most unusual experiences of my life. There were approximately one-thousand women and only two men present. Many of these women had left husbands and children behind, often at the encouragement of their husbands, who wanted the extra money that could be made in Hong Kong. But neither the churches of Hong Kong, nor the churches of the Philippines, had much to say about this exploitation of women.

Before I make any further judgments, I suppose I ought to say something about how the United States is about to impact people in both Hong Kong and China. We are about to once again grant Most Favored Nation status to China. This will guarantee free trade between our nations; which in turn, is supposed to benefit both them and us.

Maybe I am missing something here. But if there is an imbalance of trade with China that has left us with a $290 billion dollar deficit for 1996, I **fail to see** why this is supposed to be such a good deal for us—especially when we consider how many American workers could lose their jobs in this bargain. However, if we are going to deal with Red China, shouldn't we try to extract some concessions on the human rights issues in return?

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Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
Box 17 Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Marion Damon (March 27)
Box 17 Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Jeff and Penny Vann
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
2114 Prairie Rd.
Aurora, IL 60506

New Zealand

Russell and Noelle Carle
(December 30 and December 19)
(Ryan, November 15, 1979)
(Emily, June 23, 1983)
(Peter, August 14, 1991)
11 Rosehill Ave.
Papakura
Auckland 1702
NEW ZEALAND

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
Bududuram Refugee Camp
c/o John Morris
P.O. Box 9459
Airport, Accra, GHANA

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

China
Our pastor in China
All correspondence should be channelled through the missions office.

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devadason
Beulah Margaret Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Croatia

Desiré Ahola
c/o Advent Christian Croatia Ministry
P.O. Box 29
Nova Gradiska
35400 Croatia

Mexico

Carlos Quintero
387 W. Poppyfields Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
(818) 791-2447

Mario and Elena Cortez
Joel and Omega Garcia
Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Carlos Quintero

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Director
Pomeroy Carter; Planned Giving
Dwight Carpenter; Student Ministries
John Roller; Urban/Ethnic Ministries
George Teshera; Asia/Pacific Area Director

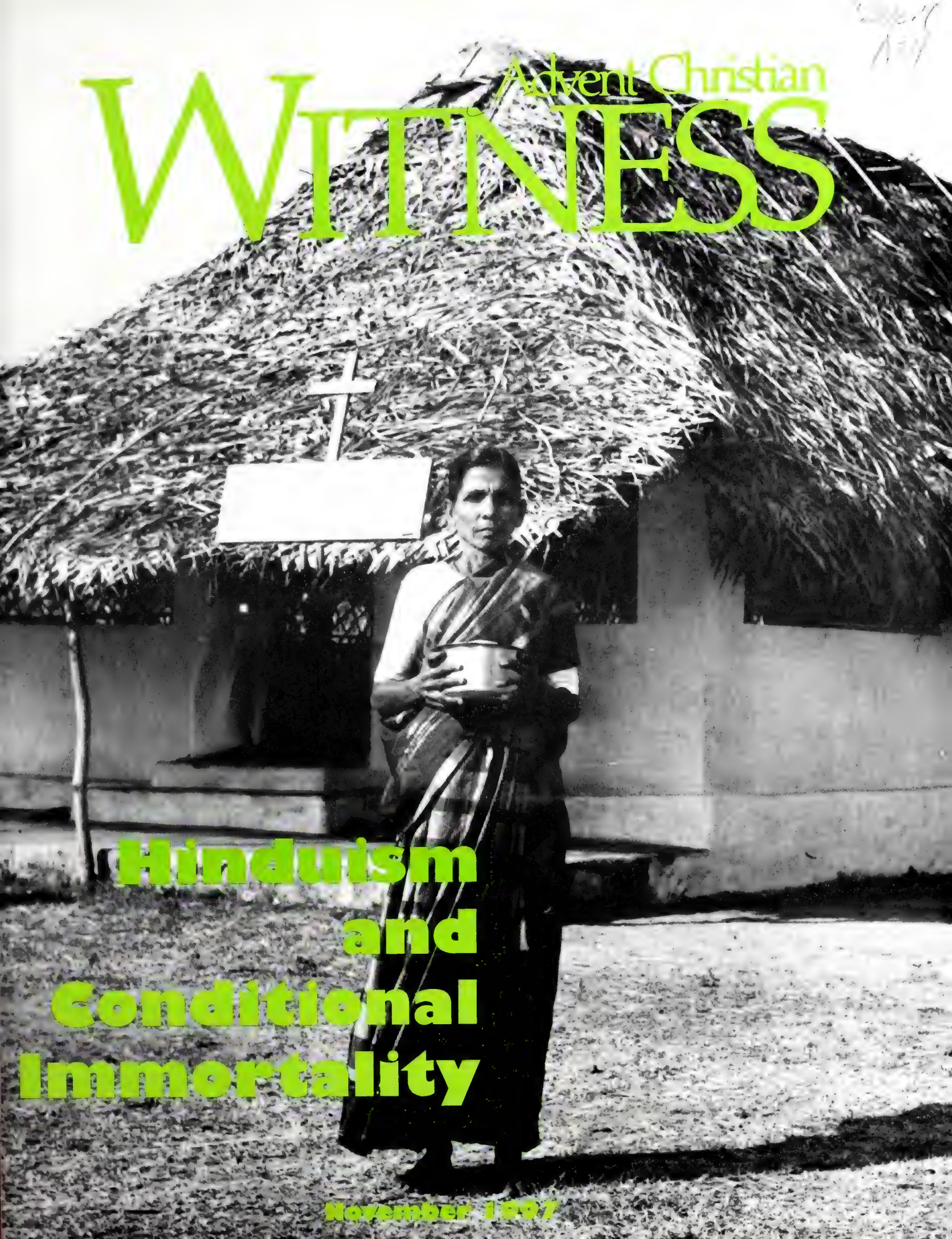
P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

Harold Patterson; World Missions
Millie Griswold; Resource Development
Russell Giasson; Services
Richard Russell; Church Relations
Luree Wotton; Women's Ministries Coordinator

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Advent Christian

WITNESS



Hinduism and Conditional Immortality

November 1997

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Volume 45, Number 8

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Editor-at-large **Robert Mayer**

Contributing Editors **Harold Patterson, William Batson, Clayton Blackstone, David McCarthy**

Typesetter and proofreader **Dawn Rutan**
Graphic Designer **Dennis Peterson**

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Sola Deo Gloria

FROM THE EDITOR-AT-LARGE



DEATH OF A PRINCESS

ON MOST evenings before going to bed, I like to catch the 10:00 news. On the Saturday before Labor Day with summer winding down, I expected a slow news day with the big story focusing on the opening of football season (my favorite time of year). But after five minutes I realized that what likely will be the biggest event of 1997, the death of Princess Diana, had just occurred and was beginning to grab world attention.

Diana was larger than life. A fairy-tale marriage to the Prince of Wales followed by two sons, the eldest of whom would eventually ascend to the throne of English royalty. A harsh and bitter divorce that resulted in her being essentially disowned by the royal family. An adoring public. A jet-set lifestyle. A passion to see the world become a better place for victims of war, AIDS, and poverty. And an endless string of photos and publicity, both wanted and unwanted.

Some have argued that Diana's death was caused by the motorcycle cameramen who pursued her car into that Paris tunnel. While I don't wish to minimize that view, her death raises a host of uncomfortable issues and questions about western culture in the late 1990s—questions and issues that merit the kind of sustained and serious discussion that I'm not sure we're capable of in a culture driven by images and sound-bites.

As David Mains reminded us earlier this decade, we live in an "entertainment-addicted" world. With the image-oriented medium of television now the dominant form of communication in the late 20th century, entertainment is no longer local or regional, but global. Through television, celebrities are now admired and respected worldwide. Celebrities testify in front of congressional committees, serve as spokespersons for a host of controversial causes, and draw attention to their accomplishments and projects through well-oiled publicity machines.

In my view, that makes the question of media coverage more complex. Can celebrities expect privacy and at the same time expect the public to embrace their advocacy of issues and causes, especially when their knowledge of those issues is no greater than yours or mine? Does celebrity status mean that their views and opinions regarding the environment, medical ethics, and which political party to support deserve more hearing than yours?

Please do not misunderstand. I'm not saying that celebrities should not use whatever influence they may have to support organizations that focus on famine, disease, and other human concerns. For every athlete or celebrity who winds up in legal trouble, there are several who have given unselfishly to care for people harmed by illness or disease and make their communities better places to live. Nor am I saying that athletes and celebrities should be denied moments of privacy. The constant glare of the media, especially the tabloid media, means that public figures in our national life have a much more difficult time finding private time for themselves and their families away from the public spotlight.

The problem comes when celebrities expect you and I to uncritically embrace their views on controversial matters of public policy, embrace the publicity for their next project, and at the same time expect little or no scrutiny of their views and projects (what is called "negative publicity"). Celebrities are often adept at using the media to promote their views and projects. In reading my local newspaper, the Charlotte Observer, I rarely

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Notice: We are without an editor and apologize to our faithful readers for not publishing an October issue of the Witness. Therefore we are extending all subscriptions for an extra month. Continue to pray as we search for and hire a new Assistant in Publications. We appreciate your understanding in this matter. Thank you.

Correction: July/August issue, p. 5, picture and caption should read Joanne Tompkins, not Thompson.



Hinduism and Conditional Immortality

Beryl J. (Hollis) Ching

REINCARNATION is a term familiar to most people these days. It is the Hindu doctrine referring to the continual process of dying and being born again. Another name for it is transmigration. In today's Western world this doctrine has become popular. It is part of the New Age belief system popularized by the actress Shirley McClaine and by others who declare they can remember something of their previous life or lives. Most of us have met people with this belief.

In Hinduism the doctrine of reincarnation doesn't stand alone. Along with it comes the Hindu teaching of karma, the belief that what you do in this world, every deed, whether good or evil, influences what you are in your next birth. The consequences of one's attitudes and conduct follow as inevitably as effects follow causes in the physical world. The conditions into which an individual is born in this world depend on his conduct in previous lives. This makes it possible to explain any apparently undeserved pleasure or suffering as a result of deeds done in a previous life.

Hindu beliefs and practices concerning life and death

Let's see if we can explain what Hinduism teaches about life and death. One problem is that Hinduism has no one book like our Bible, no one doctrine, no one way of being a Hindu. It varies from area to area, and from caste to caste. In fact, for a number of years there have been people who teach that there is no god but still consider themselves Hindus.

One thing is certain; all Hindus believe in rebirth. It is an important part of their world view and of their everyday thinking. Those who fulfill their caste duty; those who have lived lives of piety, charity, and austerity; go through a series of incarnations, hopefully gradually rising in caste. To be born as a woman would be to be born on a low plane; the highest plane is birth in the "twice-born" Brahmin caste (the priestly caste). The Brahmin men wear a special threefold sacred thread over their shoulder at all times to indicate their high caste, that they are "twice-born." A Brahmin ascetic is considered very holy, and could come to the place where he would consider himself one with god, even say, "I am god." He would confidently not expect to be reborn on earth. The souls of those who live evil lives, however, are reborn as animals or insects. One result of this thinking is the view that all living beings are the same in essence; and this line of thought is reflected in the modern emphasis that humanity is not anything more im-

portant than other animals.

There is a philosophical Hinduism, and there is the everyday Hinduism of the common people. The philosophical expression of Hinduism is not concerned about appeasing the gods and getting their favor. It is concerned with obtaining release from the process of being continually reincarnated.

How does one get release from rebirths? Before 300 B.C., there were sacrifices in Hinduism, but theoretically they are no longer required, being thought of as unnecessary destruction of life and not effective for salvation. (Salvation, remember, being the release from rebirths). Nevertheless, sacrifices do continue, even though forbidden by law in India. At least, sacrifices of hens and goats continue to some extent. And though repugnant to Hindus in general, some deluded people do occasionally engage in human sacrifice. However, they do this not to gain salvation but to try to gain some material benefits. Though illegal, there are still occasional occurrences of *suttee* (burning of widows on their husband's funeral pyres) and religious suicide. So, if sacrifice is not a way to obtain release, what should one do? One can start with moral living and with religious observances. But mysticism and asceticism are required to actually be freed from the ties of rebirth. Hence the final stage of life for a man (after the stages of being a celibate, a student, and a householder) is to leave family and live alone in poverty as an ascetic. The ascetic may attach himself to a guru (religious director and teacher) and learn techniques like breath control and meditation until he has fully realized the identity of his soul with the Absolute. The individual whose soul becomes one with the Absolute will, upon death, be set free from bondage to the law of karma (that what you do in this life influences what you are in your next). He escapes forever the dreary and painful cycle of life and death and reaches *nirvana*.

The Hindu ceremonies at death have to do with this seeking after release from rebirths. The disposal of the body is usually by cremation. It is essential for ensuring a happy rebirth that a man have a son to light his father's funeral pyre. (This necessity becomes a difficulty for Christian young men whose parents and relatives remain Hindu. It can cause deep divisions in the family as the Christian does not want to undertake a Hindu ceremony).

Whenever possible, the cremation is performed near a river. The ashes may be scattered on the river. The river Ganges is particularly sacred for this purpose. Many Hindus want to die on the banks of the river Ganges.

Besides the ceremonies connected with cremation, there are other rituals which go on for days after the death, differing from caste to caste. Strictly speaking, the family is unclean for ten days. They normally confine themselves to their home, performing ceremonies for the welfare of the dead man who cannot attain rebirth without the assistance of these rites. The ceremonies continue on certain specified days, certain months, and annually on the anniversary of the death.

A woman's position is very different from a man's. A woman's husband is her god, and her position in her next life depends on her fulfillment of her duties as a wife. Hinduism teaches the wife should have no desires or thoughts apart from her husband. She does not even refer to him by name. She should bear a son for her husband, a son who would perform the necessary rites to ensure his father's salvation. Failure to bear sons could be a reason for him to take a second wife or to cast her aside. If her husband dies, she is not permitted to remarry (though India's secular law now decrees otherwise).

Teaching the truth of conditional immortality

As Christians who believe in conditional immortality, how do we go about teaching this truth and the truth of the gospel to Hindus?

We do not start by teaching against reincarnation. A Hindu who comes to Christ in faith for salvation naturally realizes that Christian teaching is different from Hindu teaching. There are no longer 300 million gods. Christians do not say, "There is only one god, but he has many names." Nor do they say, "All gods are one." The peculiarity of Christianity is the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. It is no longer salvation by works but salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. So the Hindu convert is simply taught afresh all Christian doctrine.

This being so, the teaching from the beginning in Advent Christian churches is that immortal life is a gift of God through Jesus Christ.

The Hindu believes in a kind of natural immortality, hence a soul can be reborn millions of times. But the Bible teaches, as David A. Dean points out in *Resurrection—His and Ours*, that conditions are two: God must give it, and man must receive it. But God will not grant immortality to everyone, only to those who during this life repent and believe in Jesus Christ. No one will receive immortality who does not believe.

In India, when Christians come from other denominations, teaching our doctrines will be a different matter from teaching to Hindus. For example, in the School of Evangelism, Marion Damon did not start out with a series of lessons on theology. But as she started teaching from Genesis, she came to Genesis 2:7 (translating from Tamil), "The Lord God made man from the dust of the earth and blew the breath of life into his nostrils, and man became a living soul." She had only to point out the significance of these words to the students, when they themselves exclaimed, "Then we don't have immortal souls!" Man was

not given an immortal soul but became a living soul himself. Then, of course, in Genesis 3 we see the sinning man and woman driven from Eden, lest they eat of the tree of life and live forever (Genesis 3:22).

In India, Marion Damon wrote a Tamil book entitled, *After Death, What?*, based on Dr. Dean's book which we used to teach students in both the School of Evangelism and the lay-worker's classes. It was this book that I gave to a man who had finished his theological training in another college and wanted to join us. After reading it, his puzzled comment was, "Why, then, do Christians teach that people go to heaven or hell when they die?" It seemed so clear to him that it was not what the Bible taught. As Marion's book pointed out, this belief came not from the Bible, but from the Platonic or Greek teaching that people possess immortal souls.

How the doctrine of conditional immortality brings release from Hindu fears

So whether people came from Hindu background or from other Christian denominations, if they wanted to learn what it was we taught, we took them through our teaching and through the above book, to the Biblical doctrine.

1) There are not going to be millions of rebirths. Because man does not have an immortal soul, he cannot be reborn into this world. To the Greek philosopher Socrates, death was a gain; to the atheist, it is a total loss; to the Hindu, "it all depends." It all depends on his deeds during this life.

We avoid the Greek philosophical meaning of "soul," and we do not base our teaching on the Hindu Vedas, Upanishads, or religious epics. Instead we appeal to the Bible, which is the inspired and infallible Word of God. I recollect being told that when Pastor George Brown first came to Auckland, many Christians searched the Scriptures for every reference to soul, some even staying up all night with their concordances. They were sure they would find some reference to "immortal soul." Not finding any, they were convinced and embraced the doctrine of conditional immortality.

To the Christian, death is an "enemy," but an enemy not to be feared because it is to be destroyed by Christ. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26).

2) Their future is not based on karma, not on deeds good or evil, not on virtue, alms-giving, or austerity, but on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Advent Christians, we teach that the final destruction of the wicked and the unbeliever is in the lake of fire, which is the second death (Revelation 21:8). For the one with faith in Christ, however, his future is everlasting life: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

3) Salvation is not *nirvana*. Nirvana, remember, means becoming one with the Absolute, thus escaping forever the cycle of rebirths. Nirvana means a waning, a fading away. The Christian does not believe in a pantheon of gods, he does not believe in polytheism with a supreme Absolute god. We have one God, omnipotent, omnipresent, all-wise, holy, true, infinite, the only immortal One ("who only hath immortality" 1 Timothy 6:16). He is love. Because of that love God sent Jesus Christ, the sinless One, to be the only sacrifice for sins, and through him to grant forgiveness and immortality to us who believe. Our hope, through him, is not a fading away, an extinguishing of individual existence, but a blessed eternal future with him in a place he is preparing for us even now.

4) Sacrifice is necessary, but it is the sacrifice already made on the cross by the Lord Jesus Christ. Sin is not the failure to do caste duties, but it is disobedience to the one, living God and results in the wages of sin, death. But Christ is our Savior.

In Hinduism a savior does not exist. Salvation from the cycle of rebirth must be gained through one's own efforts. But Jesus Christ is the Savior who took our sins in his own body on the cross (1 Peter 2:24). No further sacrifice is necessary. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" (Hebrews 9:28). Through his blood we are washed from our sins (1 John 1:7) and receive the eternal life which was denied to Adam in the Garden of Eden because of his sin.

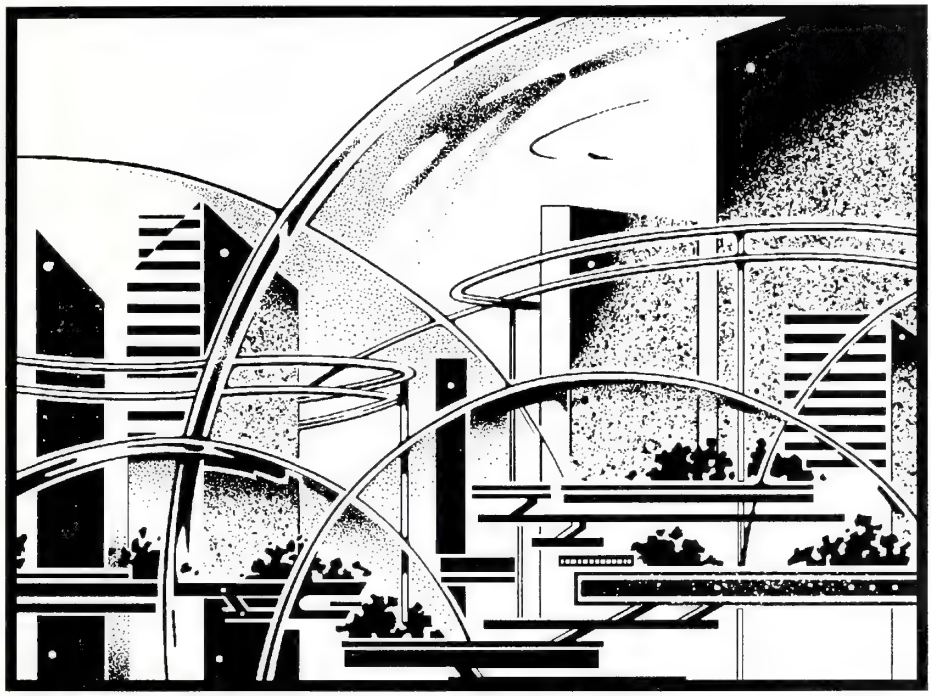
5) The spirits of the dead do not haunt us. Recognition of the fact that man does not have an immortal soul to hang around a house after death is a release to both Christian and Hindu, for the Hindu teaches that the spirit of a dead man will become a ghost and haunt the living if the prescribed ceremonies are not properly carried out. Unfortunately, even Christians may believe the spirits of the dead hang around the house where someone died. A special fear is of the spirits of people who have committed suicide. The Advent Christian teaching of conditional immortality releases from these fears.

In death we are unconscious. We realize that there is no knowledge or wisdom in the grave (Ecclesiastes 9:10). "In that very day his thoughts perish" (Psalm 146:4). "For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" (Psalm 6:5).

Because we do not have immortal souls, we cannot haunt the living after death. The Christian is asleep in Christ but fallen asleep in the knowledge that Christ, at his coming, will raise him or her from the dead.

6) The ceremonies at death have no bearing on the future of the one who has died. Incidentally, in India, Christians always bury the dead. I do not know of any Christian who cremates in India. Because there are some

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We're All That Remain

A fictional story

Mark J. Ellis
Portsmouth, N.H.

THE MANILLA envelope leaned at a sixty-degree angle on his desk's lamp stand. As usual at 10p.m., any correspondence from non-military personnel was placed in full view as he entered his ironclad domicile. His desk lamp was always turned on at 9:30p.m. by his personal aide, Tibetts McRaney, and always turned off by the same sometime in the early hours of the morning when he had slipped off into REM-sleep numbness.

McRaney had always "censored" his mail except when the front of the correspondence envelope boasted three red stripes diagonally fashioned from southwest to northeast. The manilla envelope was positioned with its back facing the commander as he entered the room, so he was ignorant of any design on the front cover.

He lit up his pipe and its sweet aroma lingered in a semi-luscent cloud around him as he threw himself into his leather chair. As usual, three darts were placed in teepee formation with their tips pointed up and their flights fitting into the vertices of his triangular ashtray. Each dart had either a blue, white, or crimson thread tightly wound around its shaft.

In a robotic manner, he threw all three darts at the dartboard ten feet away. The dartboard was a map of the world with a metal frame as its circumference.

Dart One hit where Russia used to be. His navy had made Russia the world's largest swimming pool fifty years ago. That is to say that Poland was now blessed with ocean-front property along its eastern border.

Dart Two hit Africa. The vegetation that once inhabited the deepest recesses of this continent was now an extension of the Sahara. After decades of launching missiles containing theta-virons, lambda-bacterites, alpha-beta-oxidants, and gamma-radicals meant for man, animal and plant, hardly anything remained on the dunes and abysses of Africa.

Dart Three hit Cuba. Command Central.

Dart Three always hit Cuba. Each evening, it was a reminder for him to call his Superior, the temple goddess, Ecilef. Long ago, Ecilef, rather "Felice" spelled backwards, meant "Happy Little Girl" in Spanish. Now the name was code for "a lover of men" in a new language the Superior was developing for universal use.

As he reached for his comm-device to contact Cuba, his right hand nicked the manilla envelope, forcing it to lie flat on his desk. He unhooked the receiver and started punching in the Superior's code: F-F-F.

While he waited for complete transmission, his left hand flipped over the envelope. His heart jumped as his eyes rested upon its crimson stripes. He hooked the receiver back into the holster of the comm-device and then returned his right hand to the envelope's metal tabs, squeezing them together with his thumb and index fingers. As usual, there was no letterhead and the color of the pages were blue with red type:

6 June, 2080

Dear Commander:

I have decided to send you this correspondence through your courier service, as opposed to direct mail. I have noticed via graphite-fingerprint emulsion that our previous messages have been violated.

I trust you are comfortable in your leather chair as you entertain yourself with my message. I need to tell you, Commander F. George Ellis, that although we appear to be the same age, we are not.

Of course, you and I have known each other for only a few short months since your men rescued me while I was clinging to the balance of my ship. With mixed emotions of joy and reluctance, I dare to tell you that I am your great-grandfather.

Your aide, McRaney—by mistake I might add—opened the door to your quarters as I was escorted that night

by your servants. (McRaney was quite dumbfounded that you would want a believed stranger like me to be placed in the hold next to yours.) But once I saw the portrait on your desk, I knew that you had not made any mistake.

The explosion my cruise ship suffered sixty years ago seemed only sixty minutes previous to you sighting me in the Gulf of Poland waves. Oddly and mysteriously beyond my understanding, I was warped sixty years into the future.

I know you are my great-grandson. The portait on your desk revealed three generations of our family with my estate in Rochester as the backdrop. Your grandfather, John, was my son; your father, Michael, was my grandson; and you, George, are from my seed as well. The "F" in your name does not refer to your superior's name, "Felice" or Ecilef. The "F" in you name refers to "Faith." Faith George Ellis!

As I came aboard your ship, I was draped with more seaweed than clothing. You did a doubletake toward me as I laid supine on the deck. My right sole has the tatoo- E#!). On the right sole of your grandfather, father and you are written the same. The code is really quite simple to break-the last three objects refer to its lower case on any twentieth century keyboard: 310. But your superior burned any resemblance of the previous century's correspondence devices to inaugurate her/his coded universal language.

The world you "command" is not the one I left. You live with guns under every couch pillow. Your economy is done through barter. The food you eat and drink has been invaded by supra-metals. You "pray" rather than swear allegiance, to some golden temple. The "hermaphrodite" who resides there monitors everyone's moves by the chips they have implanted in your head and wrists. (That is obviously why I am void of these chips; I am from the past.)

There is no love: philial, eros or agape. Hate shadows the little glimmer that remains in the pupil of your right eye. You were not born with one eye. They ripped your left eye away to demonstrate the submission of your fathers!

You cock your guns when a mosquito buzzes by your pillow during your interrupted sleep. There is no music. There is only static on your radios abbreviated by propaganda messages. Your monitors display "how to" shows on murdering, stealing, adultery, and sorcery. Your newspapers are filled with colored photographs of your enemies' shrunken heads nailed to the temple walls.

Your grandfather, John, was an evangelist of the God you have rebelled against. He told me about the warning signs of a near future generation. He prophesied that your generation would be numb to the Word of God. Turn back! You are the key to the past!

As I got older in my years, I was quite comfortable with believing that God's plan for me was to have a son, John, to preach the Gospel. But his plan must have been truly to seek you out.

E#!) or E310 on your sole represents Ephesians 3:10: "[God's] intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms."

The extreme opposite has occurred! The rulers and authorities of the heavenly realms have inhabited your bodies and are killing any remnant of the beauty of God. The code E#!) was not used to prevent decoding by humans, but used to prevent decoding by the thrones and evil forces of darkness!

I do not have much longer to live, but you can carry on the legacy of Jesus Christ. I can get it started again, but Christ does not want me to do it alone. If the Gospel was to come from the mouth of only one man, Jesus would have done it all by himself nearly twenty-one hundred years ago.

You know it is me—Mark, your great-grandfather. We can make a difference. Pray to God; not to the temple that resembles the one on the back of a twentieth century dollar bill.

I await your correspondence. As opposed to a letter scripted in your universal backwards language, this time send me a pure white envelope with only a crimson thread enclosed.

—Mark

He folded the pages and stuffed them along the lining in the front of his cap. Sucking on his pipe no longer entertained him, and he placed it beside the ashtray.

He looked at his map and his eyes focused on Cuba. He rose, went to the map, and returned with Dart Three in his hand. He twirled its tip between his right hand's thumb and index as he stared at what were once Russia and Africa.

McRaney knocked at the door once and entered. Without begging for permission to speak, he said, frightfully cautious, "Ecilef wants you. You failed to call in."

With his back still turned from McRaney, he said, "Get me an envelope... white."

McRaney exited.

The commander sat at his desk now untwirling the crimson thread from Dart Three and then twirling the thread around his left hand's ring finger. In robotic manner, he fired Dart Three and hit the northeast corner of the United States and whispered, "La Viver!" ❑

Editor's note: Evidently, whether written forwards or backwards, the author believes that "La Viver," rather "Revival," will begin in New England. Mark Ellis is a chiropractor who practices in Rochester, N.H. He is active at Emmanuel Advent Christian Church in Rochester.



The most important characteristic of the resistance movement in Afghanistan was their determination to keep fighting. . .

COMBAT READINESS FOR CHRISTIANS

David S. McCarthy
Portsmouth, N. H.

WAR HOLDS enormous fascination for many people in our society. Consider the number of books, games, and souvenirs relating to World War II. Would that Christians showed as much interest in spiritual warfare.

The Bible teaches that a cosmic battle is raging between forces of Satan and those who belong to Christ; a battle that extends to our personal lives. To render Christians ineffective is Satan's goal, therefore Christians need to remain on alert. Paul, who spoke a great deal about "battle," "warfare," and "fighting," provides believers with strategy for combat readiness in Philippians 4:1 when he challenges us to "stand firm in the Lord."

There is something for us to consider: the key word here is "privileges"

Verse one begins with "therefore." Paul is commenting on some ideas that he has already developed. For instance, in Phil. 3:20 he writes that "our citizenship is in heaven," which Moffatt translates as "a colony of heaven." The Philippians would understand what Paul had in mind, for Philippi was a Roman colony located in the heart of Greek civilization. In Philippi, citizens were Roman oriented. They spoke the Latin language, followed the Roman lifestyle, and lived by Roman laws although they lived hundreds of miles from the capitol of Rome.

Just as the people of Philippi needed constant reminders that they belonged to Rome, so Christians need reminders of our relationship to God. We are a colony of heaven in the midst of a godless world. What a privilege to know that we are one with men and women who have extended the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Then Paul points to a second privilege... "who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will tranform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). Christians among all people look forward to a glorious future. We need to keep our eyes on our final destiny. This is one reason for personal Bible reading and public worship. These are ways of reminding ourselves of who we are and what lies ahead.

And so as we map strategy for winning battle, our first step is to consider our privileges, who we are, and what the future holds for those who are faithful to Jesus Christ.

There is something to continue: the key word here is "posture"

Consider the phrase "stand fast." The Greeks used this word for a soldier who stands firm in battle while the enemy surges around him. This word is needed today because so many Christians are fleeing in the face of every threat, every danger. The Lord says, "Stand fast, don't give in!"

Where do attacks come from? By and large, satanic attacks have three points of origin, which may be illustrated by a circular target with a bull's eye. The circular line separates Christians from unbelievers. Inside the circle are those who belong to God through faith in Jesus Christ, and the bull's eye at the center of the circle represents you—the individual believer. Most attacks come at us from outside the circle. They originate with unbelievers who feel uncomfortable with our lifestyle and our commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. If we go against the world and adopt a lifestyle that is different, we shouldn't be surprised by persecution.

Sometimes attacks come from inside the circle. Perhaps you know a Christian who has a faith in Christ, but hasn't broken away from the pull of the world. He or she is dominated by worldly standards, and when one or several Christians take the Lord's way seriously, unspiritual Christians may try to put down those who are committed to him.

Attacks also originate inside the

bull's eye, inside ourselves. Satan knows where we are most vulnerable. If he cannot slow our progress by using outsiders or unspiritual brothers or sisters, he tries to assail us directly. He attempts to twist our desires and ambitions.

Whenever an attack comes Paul says that we are to "stand fast." This, according to the apostle, is to be our normal posture. The Williams translation is "keep on standing firm." Sometimes we have dramatic spiritual experiences and begin to feel confident that perhaps we have grown beyond the Tempter. This is when we need to exercise caution, for Satan knows how to find a weak point and slip in.

F. B. Meyer once said, "It is not the flash of the meteor that the world really wants, but the constant radiance of a fixed star." We might paraphrase those lines to read, "What God really wants to see is not the flash of a meteor, but the radiance of a fixed life." What does it mean to stand firm? Think of resistance movements like the one in Afghanistan that successfully resisted the old Soviet Union in the 1980s. A reporter went on a one-month mission to watch their operations. He said the group had training schools all over Afghanistan where people learned how to be a thorn in the side of the Communist invaders. Even though the Russians had 100,000 troops and almost an unlimited supply of firepower in Afghanistan, they were unable to put down the revolt because of the force of this resistance movement. The reporter observed, "The most important characteristic of the resistance movement is their determination to keep fighting."

That ought to be true for Christians as well. Our most visible characteristic ought to be our determination to keep fighting. We may lose some battles, we may give in to a temptation, but we can come back another day with repentance and faith. We may continue our resistance to the evil one. At a time when darkness carries the day, an active, dedicated minority is needed to make it hard for the enemy. I'm calling for people who will hold firmly to their dream, believing that God's forces will eventually conquer.

There is Someone to count on: the key word here is "prop"

Notice the phrase "in the Lord" in Philippians 4:1. Williams translates it, "by the help of the Lord." The New Testament carries a balanced emphasis. We are to stand continually, but we are also to trust in the Lord. Apart from him we will lose ground to the Evil One.

You say, "This sounds wonderful, but I'm afraid that it won't work in my life." Let me tell you about something I read some time ago. In the Rocky Mountains, high up in the Rampart Range near Colorado Springs, there is a winding road, so narrow there often is room for only one vehicle at a time. Even at that, motorists become fearful as they drive close to the edge of the pavement and look down hundreds of feet. Many people have simply given up and have backed down the mountain. A person who knew the danger and understood the fears of motorists erected a sign: "Yes, you can." These words have given courage to hundreds of motorists who otherwise would have quit. That incident has a spiritual application. As we go through life, we find ourselves in a situation where we can't go on, but the Lord helps us and raises a sign saying, "Yes, you can." Isn't that what he has done in this passage from Philippians?

"Yes, you can" win:
by considering you privileges,
by continuing your posture,
by counting on your prop.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, stand fast in the Lord." ❑

David S. McCarthy is a longtime contributor to the *Advent Christian Witness* and currently serves as pastor of the Portsmouth, N.H., Advent Christian Church.

Hinduism from page 6

Hindus who do bury, and bury north to south for some religious reason which I don't know, Christians make a point of burying east to west to prove to the Hindu that they have no faith in the Hindu perceptions.

However, this is a minor point. In funeral after funeral in our Advent Christian churches, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 becomes an important Scriptural passage. The resurrection of Christ and his power to resurrect those who believe in him, in the future, becomes as important a truth to us as it was to the apostles and to the early Christians. It is through the resurrection that we will be able to experience our salvation. It is through resurrection that immortality and everlasting life become realities. The whole person, not just a separate soul, will be saved. Christ's resurrection brought to light life and immortality (2 Timothy 1:10). Christ's resurrection is the first-fruits of the great harvest to come (1 Corinthians 15:23). Dr. Dean points out that all Christian doctrines are based on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ's Second Coming now becomes an important article of our faith, also. He comes to raise us from the dead. It is then that the corruptible puts on incorruption, the mortal puts on immortality, and death is swallowed up in victory (1 Corinthians 15:54). The Hindu coming to Christ is released from his own personal fears about reincarnation. No longer does he have the fear of an innumberable series of rebirths hanging over him. Salvation is something positive—a salvation from sin and from the consequences of sin brought about through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. ❑

Longtime Advent Christian missionary Beryl Joy Ching has retired to her native New Zealand. She presented this article at the 1996 Conference of the Conditional Immortality Association of New Zealand. This article appeared originally in *From Death to Life*, the magazine of the Conditional Immortality Association of New Zealand.

EXPAND YOUR WORLD

David Aikman

HOW MANY TIMES have you sat through a prayer meeting, or the prayer portion of a regular service, and found something shrinking just a little within you? I have—so often that my heart has sometimes felt crushed.

It's not that the dear praying folk were not sincere, or did not have genuine personal needs, or were not selflessly interested in the trials of their families and loved ones. It's that the world of their prayers, often through no fault of their own, was so achingly small. Even in on-fire, Spirit-filled churches, far too frequently the perimeter of prayer concern barely extends beyond the city limits, much less to those of county and state.

Occasionally the president of the United States will be mentioned, and the Congress, and current national social woes. That's fine. Goodness only knows, any political leader needs all the prayers he or she can get.

But the fact is that the church—the mystical body of all those who believe in Jesus Christ and honor him as Lord and Savior—is global, was global, and always will be global. Even in the days of the Acts, the apostle Paul thought and prayed constantly with a global vision, with an aching desire to see the gospel spread everywhere possible in the known world.

He prayed for Christians separated from him physically by more days of travel than it takes today to fly around the world several times. If he had known about Russia or China or Peru, he certainly would have desired to plant the gospel there, however long it took him to make the trip. And he would have exhorted Christians everywhere to pray for the church in those places.

Today, the Christian faith is the world's largest religion with close to two billion baptized adherents-about one third of the entire global population spread among 191 countries. Of course, large numbers—perhaps the majority—are nominal in their faith and far from evangelical. Yet hundreds of millions of them are sincere in their belief and commitment, and many of them suffer terribly for their faith.

From China to Iran, from parts of Africa to Colombia, Christians are imprisoned, tortured or martyred at a rate that ought to sober anyone who takes freedom of religion for granted. Christians living in freedom and relative security should be praying every day for their brethren around the world.

Paul makes it abundantly clear in Hebrews 13:3: "Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourself were suffering." We should remember them, as well as those in neighboring or distant lands who may not necessarily be suffering, but who labor daily, often in the face of immense hostility, to proclaim the same gospel to which we adhere.

During my many years as a foreign correspondent for a major U.S. news magazine, I had the privilege of meeting Christians in dozens of countries. Frequently, the conditions they faced daily put to shame most of the difficulties we tend to complain about.

What has stayed in my memory from my encounters with them, though, has remained constant: the universal joy among all Christians who share the steadfastness of hope, the uninhabitedness of love.

So for me, the body of Christ will always be these wonderful brothers and sisters in Christ I have met all over the world: the dear old Russian lady in Zagorsk Cathedral outside of Moscow, pressing an Easter egg into my hand and telling me she prays for us in the West; the Chinese scientist, his face etched with the suffering of persecution, proclaiming the joy of the Christ-filled life and quoting Scripture: "'Against such things there is no

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Questions and Answers
with Edward Fudge

The Bible says that God 'hardened the heart' of various people in the process of fulfilling his holy will. If they were bad anyway, why did God need to harden their hearts? And if they were doing what God wanted them to do, why were they punished? Any thoughts?

It seems from Scripture that God sometimes stiffens certain people who are intractably wicked and willfully mulish, to demonstrate to a larger audience his own righteous judgment and his inexplicable mercy. God also holds these hardhearted individuals accountable for the evil deeds which they freely and consistently choose to do.

Perhaps the Egyptian Pharoah who opposed Moses is the clearest example of this divine-human process. Scripture clearly says that God hardened Pharoah's heart (Ex. 4:21; 9:12; 11:10; 14:4, 8). It also says that Pharoah hardened his own heart (Ex. 8:15, 32), and that he sinned by doing so (Ex. 9:34). God hardened Pharoah's heart in order to perform signs and wonders (Ex. 7:3; 10:1-2) which resulted in the Egyptians honoring God (Ex. 14:17-18).



Later biblical authors say that God hardened the hearts of the Canaanites (Josh. 11:20), the Philistines (1 Sam. 6:6), Sihon, King of Heshbon (Deut. 2:30), and Judah before the Captivity (Isa. 6:10; 53:17). Yet God held each of these accountable, for their hard hearts also truly resulted from their own sinful stubborness and pride (Ps. 95:8).

Is this fair? You bet it is! God is our creator and he can make anything of us he wishes. He extends mercy to some and hardens others (Rom. 9:18). In the verses following, Paul responds to those who charge that God is unjust. "Who do you think you are anyway?" he asks in effect. "God is God and you are a pile of mud. You have no right to complain to the Maker of all things" (Rom. 9:19-21). Humans have no moral answer to such logic.

We cannot explain how divine sovereignty and human responsibility can both be true at once. Yet Scripture clearly affirms both truths-and so must we, whether we understand the interconnections or not. Ultimately that is not our problem but God's, for he wrote the book. And when we remember who and what we really are, we can happily leave it at that.

I recently noted that, in the person of Jesus Christ, the end of the world has come to us in advance, and that those who finally will be saved were both judged and acquitted in Jesus, their representative. Bible scholars sometimes call this "realized eschatology." A Texas brother inquires whether I agree with the notion held by some, that Jesus' Second Coming occurred in its fullness in A.D. 70, so that nothing remains for the future. He asks the question because proponents of that doctrine also call it "realized eschatology."

The interpretation to which you refer was popularized by Max King and Ed Stevens, who originally preached for Churches of Christ, and it is extreme overreaction to the futuristic prophetic speculations which fill the airwaves of radio and television and which fill the pockets of certain imaginative authors. Foy E. Wallace, Jr., a Church of Christ debater who reached his heyday in the 1940s and 1950s, used the events of A.D. 70 to counter his premillennial opponents in debate (Wallace equated the saints' thousand-year reign in Revelation with the gospel age) by saying the passage referred to "the destruction of Jerusalem." Today, the A.D. 70 folks (more precisely, hyper-preterists) have taken that same approach, but have carried it much farther than Wallace ever foresaw.

The British scholar C. H. Dodd used the term "realized eschatology" many years ago, to describe certain aspects of the teaching of Jesus in John's Gospel. Oscar Cullmann, a Swiss-French theologian, developed the theme of Jesus as the bearer of the End-Time in his brilliant book titled *Christ and Time: the Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*. But Cullmann was looking at the life-death-resurrection of Jesus Christ, not at the events of A.D. 69-70.

What happened to Jesus surprised the Jews, Cullmann explained, because they looked for Messiah at the end of the present age. When Messiah comes, they thought, resurrection will

occur, God will judge his enemies, the Spirit will be poured out on a new creation, and God's people will enjoy salvation forever. But instead of coming at the end in that sense, Messiah (Jesus) comes in the midst of time and history. So the end begins with him, for he is raised from the dead! And on Pentecost shortly afterward, God pours out his Spirit and announces salvation to all who will repent and be baptized in Jesus' name. Equally clearly, however, the world continues.

When Jesus returns, he will bring to its consummation what he has already accomplished. We live between the advents—between Jesus' first coming and his second coming. With his first coming, Jesus ushered in the beginning of the end. When he returns in glory, he will usher in the consummation of all that he has already accomplished.

When God raised Jesus from the dead, it was as if he called out "Number One" and the resurrection began. Then he paused—for a time no one knows but God alone. One day he will cry, "Number Two" and resurrection will continue. That will mark the end of the world, and Judgment Day will follow. Yet because of Jesus' resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit, we see that the end has begun—although the world still goes on.

Jesus' apostles and earliest disciples grasped both these truths as paradox. The end has come, they proclaimed—and the end is still coming. The present age is passing, and the age to come has begun—but it has not come in its fullness. Messiah came, and he will come again. Cullmann compared this two-part end to the end of World War II with its D-Day and V-Day. The decisive turningpoint occurred at D-Day when the Nazis were soundly defeated. But "mopping-up operations" continued until the formal end at V-Day.

In a similar fashion, Jesus defeated Satan and accomplished atonement for sin in his first coming. What he accomplished then will become universally evident at his return. Then the resurrection (which started with Jesus himself) will continue. All the dead will rise and be judged, the present age will totally end, and the age to come will arrive in its fullness forever.

We live "between the times" and are pulled in both directions. That is the source of conflict between flesh and spirit, between the "already" and the "not yet." We have life in Christ, but we will die if Jesus does not return first. We are forgiven, but we still struggle against sin. God heals some people but not others. God works miracles some days and places but not others. The Kingdom of God has come, but it is yet invisible and often hard to find.

With all the varieties of teaching flying about us, how are we to find and maintain biblical balance? As always, by focusing on Jesus—who is the core and center of redemptive history. Unlike the futuristic prophetic speculators, I urge that we fasten our eyes on Jesus who has come already. And, unlike the A.D. 70 folks, I urge that we fasten our eyes on Jesus, who will surely come again. ❑

Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E

S E E K

K N O W

December

1 Praise God for the upcoming **celebration of 100 years** of Advent Christian ministry in Japan.

2 Pray for **BethAnn Lay**, daughter of Japan Advent Christian missionaries Steven and Ann Lay, as she continues to receive medical treatment for a serious illness.

3 Praise God for his watchcare for Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** as Rev. Patterson has logged over sixty thousand miles during 1997.

4 Pray that God will raise up **new Advent Christian missionaries** for ministry on several fields.

5 Praise God for providing Living Water Advent Christian Church in **Memphis** with the opportunity to expand their ministry through the purchase of a larger church facility.

6 Pray that God will use Pastor **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu** and the Memphis congregation to reach men and women, boys and girls in their community with the saving message of Christ.

7 On this second Sunday of Advent, praise God for his marvelous **grace and mercy** expressed through our Lord Jesus Christ.

8 Praise God for the over 23 years of effective ministry and service that **Millie Griswold** has provided for the Advent Christian Church through her work at the denominational offices in Charlotte.

9 Pray that God will give Millie **wisdom and strength** as she begins her new responsibilities as Director of Communications for the Advent Christian Village in Dowling Park, Florida.

10 Praise God for the willing volunteer service that members of the Advent Christian General Conference **Executive Council** provide for our denomination and its congregations.

11 Pray for Executive Director **David Ross** as he looks to fill strategic positions at the denominational offices.

12 Praise God for the church-planting vision he has given Advent Christian missionaries **Russell and Noelle Carle** for New Zealand.

13 Pray that God will sustain **Russell, Noelle, and their family** in their kingdom service in New Zealand.

14 On this third Sunday of Advent, pray that the **light of the gospel** will be made known throughout the world.

15 Praise God for the partnership of our **New Zealand** brothers and sisters in Christ both through Advent Christian Missions—New Zealand and the Conditional Immortality Association.

16 Pray that God will use his people in **New Zealand** to advance the cause of Jesus Christ in a nation where less than five percent of its people profess Christian faith.

17 Praise God for the new Advent Christian pastors in **India** ordained by Director of World Missions Harold Patterson during his trip to that country earlier this year.

18 Pray for Rev. **Gell Knight** in his ministry as director of the School of Evangelism in Kodaikanal, India.

19 Praise God for the ministry that **Marion Damon** and **Barbara White** continue to perform on behalf of Advent Christian missions in India.

20 Pray for Asia-Pacific Area Director **George Teshera** as he networks with Advent Christian national leaders and missionaries on our Asian fields.

21 On this fourth Sunday of Advent, praise God for sending **Jesus Christ** to be "Immanuel, which means, **God with us**" (Matthew 1:15).

22 Praise God for the ministry that **John Roller** continues to develop in his role as assistant for Advent Christian urban/ethnic ministries in North America.

23 Pray that God will give strength and guidance for Advent Christian pastors serving **urban and ethnic congregations** in the United States.

24 Praise God for a good number of students preparing for Christian service through **Oro Bible College** in the Philippines.

25 "**Joy to the world**, the Lord is come, let earth receive her King!"

26 Pray for Advent Christian missionaries **Jeff and Penny Vann** as they continue to teach at Oro Bible College and interact with students there.

27 Praise God for the many years of effective ministry that **David Vignali** has provided for Advent Christian missions in the Philippines.

28 Pray that God will give Advent Christian workers in **Malaysia** courage and boldness in their ministry in this officially Islamic nation.

29 Praise God for the ministry of **your pastor**.

30 Pray that God will **energize your congregation** to touch lives for Jesus Christ in your community.

31 Praise God for the **religious freedom** that Christians in Canada and the United States have enjoyed for over 200 years. Pray for Christians in nations like China, Saudi Arabia, and the Sudan where religious freedom is not guaranteed and where our brothers and sisters in Christ face strong opposition and persecution.

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law'!" (Gal. 5:23); those amazing Cambodian Christians I watched being baptized in water in Phnom Penh on Easter Day 1975, just before the city fell to the Communists. Some of those believers were martyred within days of their baptisms.

Remembering them, I often think of that chorus about the body of Christ that is also a prayer: 'Father, make us one, that the world may know you have sent your Son." We are one. I pray that neither we nor the world will ever forget it. ❑

David Aikman was a foreign and domestic correspondent with Time magazine for twenty-three years. Today, he lives with his wife, Nonie, and their two daughters in Virginia, where he continues his career as a writer and journalist. Reprinted with permission by Charisma, June 1996. Strang Communications Co.

Editorial continued from page 3

find informed analysis and criticism of celebrity opinions and projects on the editorial and entertainment pages. Instead, what I find is a picture on page 2A of Harrison Ford and his wife riding a boat off the coast of France, a photo obviously shot by a freelance photographer using a long-range camera lens.

The issue is not media coverage, but the type of media coverage. What we need from newspapers, television, and other media is not tabloid-style invasion of privacy. Instead, we need to subject the public opinions, views, and projects of celebrities to the same scrutiny that we do politicians and government officials. When Jane Fonda or Tom Selleck make a pronouncement on a political matter or an issue of public policy, their views should be subject to the same scrutiny that we would give to George Bush or Bill Clinton.

Some will think that I'm much too harsh on how television and newspaper journalists and editors do their job. After all, their argument goes, they are simply giving you and I what we really want—the dirt and gossip about our favorite celebs. That argument has real merit. Can we expect real change if you and I are not willing to change our attitudes toward media coverage of celebrities? Let's face it. We're more interested in viewing pictures of Princess Diana trying to outrun the paparazzi than we are in exploring her views on the production of land mines.

Attitudes do need to change both among journalists and readers. Perhaps it will take the needless death of Princess Diana to shock us into that realization. ❑

To The Point

A collection of quotations and reflections on the central issues of faith and life in our modern society.

Hymns take us... far beyond ourselves, to where there is no East or West, South or North, and even beyond our realm. We join the cherubim and seraphim, serving God as God's hosts above; we sing from Alpha to Omega. We learn, that is, that the household whose stories we sing includes the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs, the whole cloud of witnesses, all things visible and invisible. It will take eternity to sing it all-and then will barely have begun.

—Patrick Henry

A sign is not the same thing as proof: a sign is merely a marker for someone who is looking in the right direction.

—Philip Yancey

When God is my only concern, when God is the center of my interest, when all my prayers, my reading, my studying, my speaking, and writing serve only to know God better and to make him known better, then there is no basis for anxiety or stage fright.

—Henri Nouwen

Satan is a sad spirit and makes people sad; therefore he cannot bear joyfulness. In consequence, he also flees as far as possible from music; he does not stay when one sings, especially spiritual songs. Thus David alleviated Saul's temptation with his harp when the devil plagued him.

—Martin Luther

The challenge of the cross is as uncomfortable in the twentieth century as it was in the first, and is as relevant today as it ever was. Perhaps nothing is more completely opposed to our natural instincts than this command not to resist, but to bear unjust suffering and overcome evil with good. Yet the cross bids us to accept injury, love our enemies and leave the outcome to God.

—John Stott

There is something wicked in the human heart—in all human hearts—and denying it is unrealistic. Another, and in some ways a parallel, illusion is shared by Buddhism and Christian Science: evil is unreal. Try telling that to a husband who wife has been murdered and daughter raped! Christianity is thoroughly realistic about human nature.

—Michael Green

The greatest hindrance to faith is again and again just the pride and anxiety of our human hearts. We would rather not live by grace. Something within us energetically rebels against it. We do not wish to receive grace; at best we prefer to give ourselves grace.

—Karl Barth

In Other Words

A faith that has to be protected behind walls is like a house built on sand. When the protection ceases, the faith collapses. Faith is confirmed by testing and validated by struggle in a world that gives a multitide of reasons for doubt. Instead of hiding our light under a bushel to protect it from the darkness, today we need to be more like the biblical men of Issachar, "who understood the times and knew what Israel should do."

If we understood our own times, we will know that we should affirm the reality of God by challenging the domination of materialism and naturalism in the world of the mind.

—Phillip Johnson

Sources: Philip Yancey from *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Zondervan, 1995). Patrick Henry from the *Christian Century* (May 21, 1997). Henri Nouwen from *The Genesee Diary* (Image Books, 1974). John Stott in *Basic Christianity* (InterVarsity Press, 1958). Michael Green in *How Shall We Reach Them* (Thomas Nelson, 1995). Karl Barth in *Dogmatics in Outline* (Harper and Row, 1959). Phillip Johnson in *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* (InterVarsity, 1997).

Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
Box 17 Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Marion Damon (March 27)
Box 17 Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Jeff and Penny Vann
(July 14 and May 12)
(Elizabeth, October 24, 1984)
(Connie, March 29, 1988)
(Naomi, October 11, 1990)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
2114 Prairie Rd.
Aurora, IL 60506

New Zealand

Russell and Noelle Carle
(December 30 and December 19)
(Ryan, November 15, 1979)
(Emily, June 23, 1983)
(Peter, August 14, 1991)
11 Rosehill Ave.
Papakura
Auckland 1702
NEW ZEALAND

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
Bududuram Refugee Camp
c/o John Morris
P.O. Box 9459
Airport, Accra, GHANA

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

China
Our pastor in China
All correspondence should be channelled through the missions office.

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devadason
Beulah Margaret Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Croatia

Desiré Ahola
c/o Advent Christian Croatia Ministry
P.O. Box 29
Nova Gradiska
35400 Croatia

Mexico

Carlos Quintero
387 W. Poppyfields Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
(818) 791-2447

Mario and Elena Cortez
Joel and Omega Garcia
Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Carlos Quintero

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Director
Pomeroy Carter; Planned Giving
Dwight Carpenter; Student Ministries
John Roller; Urban/Ethnic Ministries
George Teshera; Asia/Pacific Area Director

P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

Harold Patterson; World Missions
Russell Giasson; Services
Richard Russell; Church Relations
Luree Wotton; Women's Ministries Coordinator

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Advent Christian

WITNESS

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Oftentimes, God will speak to us as we learn to serve others.

Photos by Peri Stone

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Sola Deo Gloria



FOCUSING ON THE ESSENTIALS:

AN ADVENT CHRISTIAN AGENDA

FOR THE PAST five hundred years since the Protestant reformation began in Germany, Christians have disagreed sharply over a host of biblical and theological issues. That theological diversity became exceptionally strong in the United States with a variety of denominations, large and small, competing for the attention and allegiance of individual Americans. Especially before 1950, when Christian personal and moral values shaped many of the institutions and beliefs of Americans (with some notable exceptions), the only way that denominations could distinguish themselves was through stressing their doctrinal distinctives in ways that demonstrated their superiority over all of the other groups competing for attention.

> These three essentials form the core of authentic Christianity. Remove any of them and you have a faith that is less than biblical and less than Christian.

Since World War II, our culture has changed dramatically. George Barna writes that as of the late 1980s, 62% of all Americans view the organized church as irrelevant in terms of their daily lives. The major institutions of American life; government, media, business, and especially law; have become hostile to the Christian faith. And most people don't care about the denominational doctrinal distinctives that many Christians continue to argue about.

The rules have changed. So while many lament these dramatic cultural shifts, I think God wants to use them to help us focus on what's essential for Christian faith. And when we talk about essentials, there are three core beliefs recognized by believers since our Lord's time that separate the Christian faith from everything else.

Three essentials

The first essential is a belief in Scripture as the written word of God. Paul writes that "All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). For two thousand years, Christians from all denominations and traditions have affirmed the inspiration of Holy Scripture. That affirmation is the first article in the Advent Christian Declaration of Principles; "We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God...that its historic statements are correct, and that it is the only divine and infallible standard for faith and practice."

Authentic Christianity is marked by a second essential, a profound confidence in the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Look at how Holy Scripture describes Jesus: Peter declares that he is "the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matthew 16:14). John calls Jesus "the Word of God" and declares that He was active in the creation of the world (John 1:1-18). And Paul agrees with John; "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him" (Colossians 1:16). What stands at the heart of the Bible's teaching is not a group of precise religious laws or rituals but a person: Jesus Christ himself. Against the secularism of our day, the Christian faith affirms that ultimately "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:8-11).

There is a third essential that sets authentic Christianity apart from other religions and phi-

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Mourning a "World's Princess" and an "Angel to the Poor" Thoughts about the deaths of two famous women

David A. Dean
Dowling Park, Fla.

FUNERALS aren't exactly high on our list of popular weekend events. Yet millions of us paused on the opening Saturdays of last September to watch funerals for two of earths's most admired women, the glamorous Princess Diana and the wrinkled Mother Teresa. Each death deeply moved people of all classes everywhere.

Seldom before has public mourning equaled that for Diana. Throngs of admirers brought $50 million worth of tribute flowers, and others quickly contributed over $250 million for the Charity Fund in her memory. Ordinary people wept openly and lined London's streets in tribute.

Before Diana's burial, the famous Roman Catholic nun, Mother Teresa, quietly finished her dedicated life of service among India's needy. Soon multitudes of beggars and princes alike were passing by her coffin. World leaders issued statements praising her while Hindu religious leaders gratefully honored this Christian nun. And amazingly, the secular Indian government accorded her a state funeral—which not even Princess Diana had received.

A study in contrast

Despite common features in the grieving over their deaths, Diana and Teresa had been strikingly different persons. One a youthful 37, the other 50 years her senior. One an aristocrat, the other a commoner. One glamorous, the other unadorned. One a multimillionaire, the other with few possessions. One self-indulgent, the other self-effacing. One with broken wedding vows, the other having fulfilled her vow never to marry. Who can be surprised that these two famous women had such different values?

Traditional Christian virtues

Mother Teresa embodied many traditional Christian virtues. Having early taken her vows of obedience, celibacy, and poverty, she fulfilled them to death. From her native Albania she followed a heavenly vision to confront India's greater needs. She joyfully turned her back on personal comfort and poured her life into compassionate service to the world's outcasts. Whatever her normal desires for human affection may have been, she set them aside in favor of a self-giving love that worked miracles among the most hopeless. The world will remember a Mother Teresa unmarred by any hint of sexual impurity, who aspired to nothing for herself. In dying as owner of only three dresses and a prayer book, she shared the poverty both of Jesus and of Calcutta's gutters. Her legacy, the Missionaries of Charity she had founded, will carry on her work.

Almost immediately, cries arose for her church to pronounce this 87-year-old nun to be a saint. And few Roman Catholics doubt her worthiness for this honor. Indeed, this "angel to the poor" well merits the admiration of Christians in many other denominations for calling us back to Christian living.

A window into present-day values

On the other hand, public re-

sponse to Diana's death opens a window displaying the values of our post-modern world. For more than geographical distance separates her wrecked limousine in Paris from the slums of Calcutta. The values by which Mother Teresa and Princess Diana lived were worlds apart.

One "authority" on the princess captures the high esteem in which the public revered Diana in his comment to a television interviewer, "In the modern sense of the term," he affirmed, "Diana was a saint." Although he radically redefined sainthood, he was serious. She did embody numerous characteristics highly respected in our age.

For a starter, Lady Diana illustrates our contemporary love affair with glamour and physical beauty. She appeared to us youthful, tall, thin, golden-haired, and attractively attired in expensive clothing. As the "world's princess," Diana was every little girl's model of a beautiful woman. She occupied a high place in a world so blinded by the glitter of physical glamour that it cannot recognize the worth of inner loveliness.

The Princess also illustrates our modern redefinition and diminishing of morality. Traditional moral standards have applied to both our public and private actions. Today morality is being restricted to outward and public actions so that sexual impurity, lying, and promise breaking are now considered to be private matters—not moral issues. Diana demonstrated a worthy and commendable a concern for social evils like land-mine dangers to civilians, and the suffering of lepers and AIDS patients. She visited victims, raised money for their needs, and campaigned to address numerous social wrongs. Yet at the same time, both she and her husband confessed their acts of adultery and repudiated their wedding vows. Yet God still claims complete authority over us and insists that we be moral in both our public and private lives. He does not allow us to substitute acts of public charity for personal integrity and morality.

The modern isolation of our private from our public lives displays itself in Diana's bitter feud with the *paparazzi* who pursued her until the night of her death. She welcomed press and television coverage of her public appearances at formal ceremonies and charitable events. The media thus enhanced her fame, produced for her an image the public loved, and assisted her fund-raising. But she resented intrusion into her private life, insisting her "right of privacy" to pursue her own interests without public scrutiny. She embraced the modern dictum that personal integrity is a purely private matter and no business of anyone else.

Princess Diana also reveals the effects of pluralism, another important value in today's world. Pluralism views all nations, cultures, customs, and religions as having merit and being worthy of honor. Whereas Christianity claims to be the only way to God and preaches the crucified Jesus as the only Savior, religious pluralism insists that there are many ways to God. Different traditions and different religions can meet our needs, if only we are sincere in following our chosen faith. Religion's great value is to provide for our emotional needs and to help us find personal fulfillment. No wonder the press rejoiced that, after so much sadness in her life, Diana had at last found happiness in her love for the wealthy Emad "Dodi" al Fayad. Few seemed to notice (and fewer still cared) that the two professed very different religions; he the Muslim and she the Christian. A projected "mixed marriage" which would have disgraced both families in a previous time was ample cause for rejoicing in our own.

One an aristocrat, the other a commoner. One glamorous, the other unadorned. One a multi-millionaire, the other with few possessions. . .

Perhaps most significantly, Diana had won praise during her lifetime by her refusal to play the traditional British role for the bride of a future king. The press commended her for "being true to herself" and for resisting compliance with what the royal family expected of her. In typically modern fashion, Diana "did her own thing," feuded with Buckingham Palace, and lived as she personally chose to live—regardless of what anyone else thought. Whether as a wife, princess, or mother, she could have summarized her life in the expression that Frank Sinatra's vocal made famous, "I did it my way."

A call to reconsider our place in this world

These two recent funerals invite us to reconsider our own place and purpose in this world. Each of these two women provides an example of committing yourself to a noble cause. In their unique ways each calls us to active involvement in addressing the great suffering of our world.

But neither Diana nor Teresa should become our standard. In a world where biblical Christianity is rapidly becoming a quaint cultural memory, God calls us to return again to Scripture and to wrestle with what it means to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ in these post-modern times. It is time to rediscover what following Jesus means today. ❑

David A. Dean recently retired after a career of teaching first at Berkshire Christian College and later at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Dorothy, will leave this month for an extended stay in Madras, India where David will teach at Indian Theological Seminary.



Volunteering is not an obligation, a patriotic duty, or a sacrifice.

VOLUNTEERISM
A Privilege

Peri Stone
Chicago, Ill.

ALL EYES were on me. I searched the faces around me, trying to feel out the common response. At the same time, I bit my lip, holding back laughter.

It was an honest mistake, especially for a Bosnian refugee in his first few weeks of an English class. He had mixed up the verbs watch and cook, accidentally saying, "I cook my television."

I wanted to approach the situation with sensitivity so as not to discourage him. I repeated what he said in gentle mock confusion. There was moment of deep thought as the group flipped through their mental translators. Slowly, one after the other caught on until we were all slapping our knees laughing. We used the mistake as a joke for the rest of the morning, asking each other whether or not we liked to eat our televisions.

It was my second month helping teach the World Relief ESL class that met at Immanuel Covenant Church in Chicago. I only came once a week, but was quickly accepted by both the teacher, Julie, and the class.

Days like that, where learning mixed with laughter, were common. The joy of these people amazed me. They were lawyers, managers, sometimes students the same as me, that left all they knew to come to the United States. They hoped for a life that would be peaceful, without the deafening sound of dropping bombs. It puts life in perspective.

Nada, an older woman who had been a teacher in Bosnia, spent one morning trying to describe to me a life filled with fear.

"There were bombs... everywhere," she said, her hands sweeping the air. She scribbled maps of Bosnia on scrap paper. Bombs had been dropped mere blocks from her house. Other students gathered around us, pointing to places on the map that were now gone. They told me about their heartaches matter-of-factly and almost eagerly. It was obvious they appreciated my interest, just as they appreciated the small amount of time I spent with them each week.

Their joy and humility made me

realize what volunteering really is.

It shouldn't be looked at as an obligation, or our patriotic duty, as President Clinton's recent urging seems to do. He now hopes to depend on volunteers to shoulder gargantuan problems like welfare and illiteracy. Words like duty and obligation make the whole experience sound burdensome.

Community service shouldn't be viewed as a sacrifice either. Any "sacrificing" we do usually pales in comparison to the kind of life lived by those we serve.

Volunteering is, by all accounts, a privilege. If it's viewed as anything less, we do everyone involved a disservice.

"I learned more than I thought"

I remember one particular class where we were divided into two groups. I led one and Julie led the other. The students were supposed to make up questions to ask the other group. A few of the students asked, "How often do you paint your house?" I suggested they come up with something more creative. Osman's new question was "How often do you paint your cousin?"

Everyone, of course, thought this slip-up was hilarious, even Osman. But I wrote it down anyway, saying it could be our "joke" question. When it came time to ask the other group the question, it was everything I could do to hush the giggles. Osman asked the question and even repeated it a few times. The other group responded with confused looks aimed at Julie, who urged them to answer.

"I never paint my cousin!" one of them exclaimed to a near-hysterical room. Someone from my group said, "Yes, yes, I always paint my cousin. Every day!"



I count it a privilege to have been able to share that laughter with them. They trusted me; they let me in. We laughed.

Some days weren't always so easy. The first month I helped the students one-on-one, typing out their resumes. The language barrier was so frustrating. Often the job they held in Bosnia had no American equivalent, and to get them to flesh out their job responsibilities was like pulling teeth. Some of the students were convinced that every detail of their life needed to be included. It took time to convince them otherwise.

Even more frustrating were personal obstacles. I've never been a very patient person. I don't talk slowly. And teaching is not my "spiritual gift." But God managed to use me in spite of those things. And in the process, I probably learned more than I ever taught.

Volunteer opportunities are endless: tutoring, "adopting a grandparent," providing respite care to someone with HIV/AIDS, a rape advocate, volunteering at a homeless shelter. There is something for everyone; a need waiting to be met.

It's said best in Luke 5:31, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." ❑



Peri Stone is Senior at North Park College in Chicago, Ill. She serves as co-editor for the *Urban Ministries Magazine* produced at North Park.

AWELESS CHRISTIANITY

Tom Warner
San Diego, Calif.

AT A CONFERENCE I attended, one speaker's preaching was more like a comedy act. No Scripture that I recall, just three points tying funny stories together in an exhortation. I love funny stories that make a point, but this "sermon" grieved me. It seemed to lack a holy awe of God's greatness, power, and grace. It was part of a "worship service," but it appeared that entertainment was the goal, rather than God's glory. If anyone went away impressed, it was with a sophisticated speaker more than with our awesome Savior.

What grieves me more is that the problem of that speaker is mine, too. I'm prone to put something besides God and his glory at the heart of what I do. Sometimes my motivation for preaching, pastoring, singing, and witnessing may be my glory more than God's.

At other times, my motivation may be to reach people so that they will be saved from the emptiness of life without Christ and from eternal destruction. For these reasons, I'm concerned about missions and disciple-making. Love for people is a noble purpose, but it's not enough. Missions and disciple-making are very important, but, I don't believe they should be our *ultimate goal.* At least, not since I read an article by John Piper in *Mission Frontiers* Magazine. Piper insists that *worship* should be our ultimate goal. "Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever."

We should quickly add that "worship" includes more than what happens in our church sanctuaries on Sunday mornings. Romans 12:1 urges us to present our bodies to God in holy obedience as part of our "reasonable service" or "spiritual worship." The Greek term for service or worship is "liturgia," from which we get "liturgy"—usually understood as a particular style of ceremony in a worship service. But worship includes everything we do, *if* it's done to glorify God.

Why should we reach people with the Gospel? In Ephesians 1, we're told three times why God rescues people from sin: He saves us "for the praise of His glory" (1:6, 12, 14). So missions and disciple-making are very important. But behind that activity should be a holy awe of God's greatness and a desire that he be glorified by those who are won to Christ and taught to obey him.

> A God-intoxicated, holy awe of the Lord's greatness, beauty, glory and grace is often missing in church life.

Otherwise, we may get so concerned about winning people that we'll win them to a watered-down kind of Christianity that's more like entertainment than worship. If our overall goal is not to glorify God, we may slowly compromise our message until it is man-centered. I know, I've done it more often than I'd like to admit.

Concerned Christian authors theorize about when certain churches or denominations are not spiritually healthy or are declining in membership. John Piper's diagnosis is that a God-intoxicated, holy awe of the Lord's greatness, beauty, glory and grace is often missing in church life, sermons, "worship" services and exhortations to faithful service. This disease might be called "Aweless Christianity".

So, what should be our ultimate mission in 1997? First Corinthians 10:31 states it well: "....whatever you do, do all to the glory of God". To that end, will you join me in the following prayer? "O awesome God, save us from this aweless kind of Christianity. Give us a fresh glimpse of your glory and majesty, so your Spirit can shine upon others through us. Be glorified in our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen." ❑

Tom Warner is pastor of North Park Community Advent Christian Church in San Diego, California. From *Echoes, January 1992.*

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losophies. Paul expresses it so well, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). The only way we can experience forgiveness of sin, a right relationship with God, and the promise of eternal life is by God's grace expressed through Jesus Christ. We cannot earn these things through our attempts to do good things nor through following the teachings of other religions and philosophies. Jesus boldly declared, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

The impact of secularism

These three essentials form the core of authentic Christianity. Remove any of them and you have a faith that is less than biblical and less than Christian. And throughout church history, they have been recognized as the heart of Christian faith. Read the works of Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Menno Simons, John Wesley, and our own founder, William Miller, and you will find these three essentials at the heart of their message. Look at the modern missionary movement and you'll find them at the center of efforts to advance the gospel throughout the world.

Today, we live in a society where these core essentials of Christian faith are under strong attack. Modern day secularism, especially the variety present in many colleges and universities, declares that God is a myth and that those who take Christian faith seriously are either mentally deluded or emotionally unbalanced. Even within the church we find larger and larger numbers of people who claim that the inspiration of Scripture, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, or the nature of salvation can be watered down in ways more palatable to secular thinking.

At the same time, we live in a culture where people wrestle with tremendous physical, emotional, and social needs. The secularism trumpeted loudly by the key institutions of our society has not brought a sense of well-being, harmony, and wholeness to Americans and Canadians. If anything secularism has made us more violent, more fearful, more self-centered, and less hopeful for the future.

An Advent Christian agenda

What should Advent Christian people and churches focus on in this society? What do we have to say to people trying to cope in our secular culture?

What's most important is that we as a denomination affirm the essentials of the Christian faith—Scripture as the written word of God, the incarnation, lordship, and centrality of Jesus Christ, and justification by faith in Jesus Christ alone—and begin to communicate them in ways that will impact the thinking of unbelievers. It's not enough to simply believe them; we must live them as well. As the 21st century approaches, these three essentials of Christian faith must boldly be proclaimed from Advent Christian pulpits in ways that bring fresh hope to people. And as we think about educating pastors and leaders for the next century, these essentials must be at the center of our efforts. The 21st century will require men and women who can passionately, boldly, and lovingly proclaim (and live) the essence of Christian faith.

Also, we need to take a fresh look at our denominational distinctives and ask how they can help us proclaim the essentials of Christianity. I recognize that our distinctives are not the essence of Christian faith. I understand that well meaning Christians disagree with them. Yet one of the reasons I'm an Advent Christian today is my strong belief that our Conditionalist beliefs reinforce the essentials of Christian faith. Advent Christians must realize that if we move away from those essentials, then our distinctives become irrelevant.

One more suggestion. Advent Christian people have always been theologically diverse on a host of issues. Among us are Calvinists, charismatics, Arminians, non-Charismatics, and a host of other camps on various theological issues. It's time we learn to distinguish what's essential from what's not. When Jesus returns, his kingdom will include Arminians, Calvinists, charismatics, non-charismatics; and, in fact, women and men from all those groups who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and savior. So no matter what your theological understanding, it's time to practice the words of Jesus, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

Advent Christians can lead the way into the 21st century. We can make disciples by boldly proclaiming without compromise the essentials of authentic Christian faith. We can do that in a spirit of love for each other and for unbelievers who are lost without Christ. That needs to be our agenda as we begin a new century. ❑

Advent Christians **can** lead the way into the 21st century. We can make disciples by **boldly** proclaiming without compromise the **essentials** of authentic Christian faith. We can do that in a **spirit of love** for each other and for unbelievers who are lost without Christ.

GOD'S BANQUET OF GRACE

Lou Going
Windsor, Connecticut

THERE ARE many amazing statements in Scripture. One of the most amazing to me is the one made by David in Psalm 63:3. David describes himself as being in a spiritually arid and parched condition. He is "in a dry and weary land where there is no water." It is hard for me to tell, when I read David's words, where his actual experiences end and his spiritual struggles begin. (He did spend a great deal of time in the Palestinian wilderness. He had real and not imagined enemies, and even his friends turned out to be disloyal and treacherous). Maybe there was no line. Whether or not David was actually in the desert, he nevertheless was going through a "desert-like" struggle.

He was far from the Lord's sanctuary. David must have spent a great deal of time near or in the tabernacle. Yet he is not far from the Lord. David recalled the times when he actually saw (this is what I think) the *shekinah* glory of God. "I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and glory." Wow! David set his eyes on the glory of God. Others did too. Remember all those children of Israel? They too saw God's manifest glory in the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Yet David saw into the glory, if you will. David saw more. He not only saw God's glory but by faith he saw into that glory. And it was that vision of God that David had with him even though he was far from God's house. What did David see by faith? Well here is that amazing statement: "Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you."

God created and redeems out of the fullness of his glory, so that he might share his glory with creation and the church.

It is wonderful to see the glory of the Lord, but we need to see into his glory. Saving faith sees into God's glory and sees God's motive for revealing his glory to sinners. He is motivated by love for sinners. God's motivation for sending his Son, who is the glory of God incarnate and who would glorify the Father and be glorified by his death on the cross for sinners, was God's immeasurable love for sinners. "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," (1 John 4:10). I believe this is what David saw by faith and longed for with deep sense of need and passionate hunger and thirst.

What was David's life to him, if he had not the love of God? That is why Jesus taught that we must lose our lives for his sake. We do not lose our lives in order to do Jesus any favor. That is not what "for my sake and the gospel" means (Mark 8:34-35). No, we must lose our lives in order to find life. We must not hold onto our lives so that we might come to embrace God's incarnate love which is better than life! This does not lead to emptiness but to fullness. David peered into the glory of God and saw God's banquet of grace for the soul. As he fed on this food of grace by faith, he delighted in God and his delight expressed itself in grand and lavish worship. "Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you." David's desert soon turned into a verdant, lush, and delectable garden!

God's ultimate motive in revealing his glory and opening blind eyes so we can see into his glory and gaze upon his love and grace for sinners, is for "the praise of his glory." God created and redeems out of the fullness of his glory, so that he might share his glory with creation and the church. This is a transaction that is completed when we, like David, feast on God's glory and give praise and worship to him for his glorious grace. As we do, our hearts are filled, our soul's thirst is slaked and God is truly praised and worshipped. His glorious love indeed is better than life because he becomes for us our new and eternal life. This is indeed good news! ❑

Lou Going is pastor of Faith Community Church in Windsor, Connecticut. From the June 1997 issue of the Faith Community Church newsletter.

Questions and Answers

with Edward Fudge

NOW AND THEN I read something in the Bible that leaves me positively dumbstruck—such as those times someone allegedly speaking for God summarizes what God expects from folks—in both Old and New Testaments.

Take Micah for example. The prophet could have found plenty to preach about in Judah in the eighth-century before Christ. "What does God really want from you?" he asks. Then he answers his question straight out—"to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly before your God" (Micah 6:6-8). The rabbis counted 613 specific commands from God, which they eventually expanded into an encyclopedia-sized set of books known as the Talmud. Yet according to Micah, God wants these three things most of all.

And what about Jesus himself? Asked to identify the "greatest" commandment, he did not specify baptism, church attendance, or helping the poor. He didn't even quote one of the Ten Commandments. Instead, he cut right to the core. "Love the Lord your God," said God's own Son, "with all your heart and soul and mind and strength" (Matt. 22:35-38). Not "obey" God, or "fear" God, or even "serve" God. Love God. And the second greatest commandment (this is Jesus' estimation, mind you, not mine or some other sinner's) is to love one's neighbor as oneself (Matt. 22:39-40).



Even Paul the Apostle gets in a word on the subject. "Love your neighbor," he said, and that "fulfills the law" about neighbors (Rom. 13:10). Even when considering these three jewels—faith, hope, and love—"the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13). Above all other traits, we are to put on love, which is the bond of completeness (Col. 3:14).

Obviously, the person who seeks to obey these core commands will find that they have enormous consequences and implications for the daily details of life. Neither Micah, Jesus, nor Paul would suggest otherwise. Still I marvel at the daring summaries they so boldly set forth.

When we become so encumbered with "religion" that we mistreat people, or when we get so caught up in Bible interpretation that it obscures the God who speaks through the Bible, we need to remember these texts. When life seems confusing and moral discernment appears difficult, it is powerfully helpful to remember that God's chief concerns are not that complicated at all. We have it on the highest authority.

A sister in Houston expresses concern for the spiritual well-being of her friend, a non-religious Jewish physician. "I pray for her and her family," she writes, "but beyond taking the opportunity to share whenever she gives me an opening, I don't know what else to do. Any serious attempt to evangelize would be met with alarm and distaste. I am thinking this is a 'wait on God' situation. Or is that an avoidance of Christian responsibility?"

The fact that you ask this question tells me you are not trying to avoid responsibility. And my reading of Colossians 4:2-6 suggests that you could not be more serious in your attempt to evangelize. Unfortunately, the "E-word" has fallen into disrepute among many Christians. This demise of evangelism has resulted partly from fear and cowardice, partly because of the church's infection by a popular culture which abhors religious conviction, and partly in reaction to the distasteful antics of some whose zeal exceeds their knowledge and good manners. In this text from Colossians, Paul offers a practical bouquet of factors which together provide a natural context for evangelism and a becoming method for carrying it out.

"Devote yourselves to prayer," he says first, "keeping alert," always "praying that God will open a door for the word." God himself prepares lives to receive the gospel, opens hearts to hear it, and gives faith to receive it. We ask him to do all that, then we watch to see where he is working so we can join in what he is doing.

"Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders," the apostle continues. Our own daily lives usually provide the connection with others who God will touch through our efforts. Our consistent, observable conduct also lends credibility to our conversation when the time comes to speak a gospel word about Jesus and God's love revealed in him.

"Making the most of the opportunity," Paul concludes. "Let your speech always be with grace." When God provides an open door and an open heart, we need to speak clearly and courageously, but also graciously and with sincere respect.

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Pam Gardner
Ballwin, Missouri

ANTICIPATING HIS APPEARING

JESUS IS coming again. It is not a question of if he will come. It is not a question of when he will come. The real questions are: Are you ready? Are you watching? Are you anticipating his appearing? The second coming of Jesus Christ is the believer's hope. Christ has gone to the Father and is coming again. Do we eagerly look forward to that day when Christ returns? With a glorious trumpet sound and the voice of the archangel, we shall see him descending through the clouds.

The resurrection of the dead is a cornerstone of belief for Advent Christians. The Scripture tells us, "the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16-17). What excitement. What anticipation. What a glorious promise for Christians.

Thinking about Christ returning is an awesome thought. To think of the Son of God coming in glory is a promise that uplifts us when we are down, strengthens our faith when we encounter difficulties, gives us courage when we have none of our own, and provides hope for the future.

Preparing the way

Christ has gone before us to prepare in many different ways. He has prepared the way for eternal life by his sacrifice on the cross. He has been in the grave separated from the Father to show us the power of the Sovereign God, who has the power to raise not only Jesus from the dead, but all humanity also. For those who believe, he has prepared the way for us to be raised to a life everlasting in communion with Jesus. For those who do not believe, they will be raised to face the second death, which is complete separation from God.

For those who believe, Jesus is also preparing a place for us (John 14:2-3). Have you experienced a time when God has worked miraculously and you find yourself standing in amazement of what he has done? Let your imagination run for a moment and think of the miracles God has done. Then think about the kingdom he is preparing for us. It's wonderful, isn't it? It's greater than the best Christmas morning in your childhood memory. It is more beautiful than the most glorious sunset you've ever seen. It is more spectacular than any of the wonders of this world. The kingdom of God is greater still than any of these. The book of Revelation gives us just a glimpse of its glory

(Rev. 21:18-23). The greatest of all will be the glory of God (Rev. 21:2-3).

Hope and assurance of things not seen

The blessed hope of the Christian is the return of Christ (Titus 2:13). All the pain, all the struggles, all the suffering of this life will be past when Christ returns. We can't escape the difficulties of this life, whether it be sickness, marital problems, trouble with our children, a job loss, or a job that causes much stress. The difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is how we face these difficulties. Since we have hope for the resurrection and eternal life with Christ, the problems we face in this life are only temporary. We have a destiny. We have a future. When our faith is in Christ we draw on his strength to get us through these difficult times in this life. God promises to give us strength to endure (Nahum 1:7; Isaiah 41:10; Psalm 18:2; 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 12:9).

We have hope, not because of something that we can see now, but because of the promise of Christ's return. There will be no comparison between this life and "the glory to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18). Hope and faith go hand in hand. God's desire is for the seed of faith that was planted when we accepted Christ as our Savior to germinate and grow. When we plant a seed we can't see it germinate and sprout a new plant, but we have hope and faith that it will. As our faith grows strong our hope will get stronger. The Holy Spirit will guide us, teach us, and also increase our peace and assurance (John 14:26-27).

The Scriptures are our guidebook for life. We need to spend time with the Lord and in his Word that we may know him. In knowing him, we will be growing deep roots of faith and great branches of hope that reach out to those around us.

Will he find us watching?

I love looking at the sky after a storm. In the summertime, when there is a break in the clouds, radiant sunbeams shine down with bright blue sky shining brilliantly behind the clouds. I can see Jesus returning through the clouds on such a day, his own brilliance much greater than that of the sun. I've often called it a resurrection sky. My daughters have heard it so much that often after a storm they

look into the clouds for a resurrection sky.

Our anticipation of his appearing does not mean we spend all of our time gazing into the sky. It also indicates being prepared; just as we do at home when we're anticipating company. We prepare the house, we think about what we will do while we're together, and we tell those close to use about the friend who is coming to visit. Look at the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). This parable illustrates the need to be prepared before the Lord returns. It was more than just looking for the bridegroom to come. There were certain things which needed to be done before the bridegroom came. The wise virgins had considered those things and were prepared, the foolish virgins had not. When Christ returns there will be no further opportunity to accept him as Savior. The time to be ready is now. The parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-20) shows the need to be doing our best for the Master in anticipation of his return. That means cultivating a relationship with the Master so we will know his plan for our lives and carry out that plan until he returns. The Holy Spirit will enable us to use whatever talents and gifts given to us for God's purpose, to present the Good News to the world.

Anticipation also indicates doing whatever it takes to get those around us to be prepared and watching also. The last command Jesus gave us as he ascended into heaven was to "be my witnesses" (Acts 1:7-8). The time for his return was not the important factor. He again promised the Holy Spirit. The disciples weren't to leave Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit had baptized them with power. Then after they had received that power, they were to go out and be witnesses.

We are to witness in three areas. The first is in familiar surroundings, in a place where we feel comfortable and at home. The second setting is away from those familiar surrounding not in our own neighborhood and not within our comfort zone. It's a stretch of our faith to move out of circumstances when we are comfortable. This type of witnessing is still geographically close to home. The third area for witnessing is missions, "to the remotest part of the earth." Missionaries are geographically away from home. Their call will take them across national borders, and into other language and cultural groups.

Our witness will spread the gospel of Christ, telling people that he is coming again. It will give hope to the suffering, encouragement for the downhearted, strength to the weak, and faith for the future.

Conclusion

Are you ready for Christ to come again? When we accept Christ as Savior, his grace is sufficient to forgive all our sins. He gives us peace so we can live effectively in this world. Jesus also gives us hope for the future—the promise of eternal life. We can be assured of these things

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Mission Prayer Partnership

A·S·K

A B I D E

S E E K

K N O W

January

1 Praise God for the **opportunities** that 1998 will bring to proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

2 Pray that God will use the **Advent Christian Church** in a strategic way to accomplish his kingdom purposes in the communities and nations where he has called us to serve.

3 Praise God for the appointment of **John Roller** as Resource Coordinator for the Advent Christian General Conference.

4 Pray for **Rev. Roller** as he moves to Charlotte later this month and as he continues his ministry as urban/ethnic coordinator for Advent Christian World Missions.

5 Praise God for a successful gathering of Advent Christian **urban and ethnic pastors** several weeks ago in Los Angeles.

6 Pray that God will give strength and wisdom to the over one dozen Advent Christian **urban and ethnic pastors** serving in cities throughout the United States.

7 Praise God for leaders from several evangelical ministries who minister to **international students** from countries around the world who attend colleges and universities in North America.

8 Pray that many of these **international students** might come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and be effective servants for him in their home countries.

9 Praise God for 100 years of Advent Christian ministry in **Japan**.

10 Pray that God will give **Japanese Advent Christians** a continued great commission passion as they celebrate their 100th anniversary this year.

11 Praise God for the Mexican national students studying at **Tecate Bible Institute** and preparing for pastoral and church planting ministries in that country.

12 Pray for our church planting families—**Mario and Elena Cortez, Joel and Omega Garcia**, and **Alberto and Fabiola Gomez**—as they continue their work in establishing congregations in the Baja California area of Mexico.

13 Praise God for several Rumanian families who committed their lives to Christ during special meetings held by Pastor **Desiré Ahola**.

14 Pray for Pastor Ahola and the Advent Christian congregation in **Zagreb, Croatia** as they communicate the

good news of God's love in a community and nation recovering from the effects of civil war.

15 Praise God answers to prayer regarding several important issues relating to our larger Advent Christian conference in **India**.

16 Pray that God will give **Barbara White** and **Marion Damon** discernment and strength as they continue their ministry in Kodaikanal, India.

17 Praise God for continued growth of Advent Christian congregations in **India**.

18 Pray that God will raise up one or more Advent Christians to provide administrative and missionary leadership for Advent Christian work in **India**.

19 Praise God for the continued effective ministry of **Russell and Noelle Carle** in their work to establish Advent Christian congregations in New Zealand.

20 Pray that God will give **Russell, Noelle, and their family** continued wisdom, strength, and compassion for those in New Zealand who are lost apart from Jesus Christ.

21 Praise God for Advent Christian **college and university students** now returning to campuses across the country to begin their spring semester.

22 Pray for student ministries coordinator **Dwight Carpenter** as he continues to organize Advent Christian student ministries on several strategic campuses.

23 Praise God for the opportunities that Advent Christian congregations will have to participate in the work of Advent Christian missions through the upcoming **Penny Crusade**.

24 Pray that God will provide for the financial needs of Advent Christian ministries through **United Ministries**.

25 Praise God for for Advent Christian students studying for Christian service at **Oro Bible College** in the Philippines.

26 Pray for Advent Christian missionaries **Jeff and Penny Vann**, and **David Vignali** as they teach at Oro Bible College and interact with Advent Christians throughout the Philippine island of Mindanao.

27 Praise God for the national Advent Christian missionaries who serve in **Malaysia, Liberia, Ghana, and Nigeria**.

28 Pray that God will provide for the physical and spiritual needs of Advent Christian believers in the **People's Republic of China**.

29 Praise God for the **assurance of salvation** that all followers of Jesus Christ can have as we serve him today.

30 Pray for Director of World Missions **Harold Patterson** as he prepares for a busy travel schedule in the weeks to come.

31 Praise God for his provision of a new facility for the Advent Christian congregation in Memphis, Tennessee under the leadership of Pastor **Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu**.

Fudge continued from page 11

As you continue doing these things, dear sister, God will use you in his great saving purpose. Perhaps that will include your Jewish friend, but it will certainly be according to God's own divine sovereignty, with whoever that might involve. Your life is part of God's eternal plan and Christ is being glorified through you.

A friend urges that we accept the language of ancient Christian creeds concerning Jesus' existence before the Incarnation as eternally "God the Son." The Jehovah's Witnesses, on the other hand, say we should translate John 1:1 as "the Word was a god" and deny that God actually came as a man. What is the biblical balance here?

Certainly John 1 says that the Logos was divine, or God, and that it became incarnate in the man we know as Jesus of Nazareth. The Jehovah's Witness *"New World Translation"* of the New Testament stands quite alone in claiming otherwise.

On the other hand, it is difficult to translate the highly specialized terminology of the early Greek Councils about divine "persons" into modern English in a clear and meaningful way. Outside the philosophical context of the ancient Church Fathers, their language usually comes off sounding like three heavenly rocking-chairs in a row with God-names on them—something the Bible not only fails to affirm but positively argues against.

The marvel is that the Creator of the universe, the God of the patriarchs and prophets, actually loves his erring creatures, and that, in the baby born in Bethlehem that first Christmas so long ago, he took on our nature, then took on himself our brokenness of soul and body alike to make us pure and whole. We joyfully confess that that he was Emmanuel—"God with us"—and that by his living and dying and rising again, he has brought us back to God. ❑

Anticipating continued from page 13

through the Scriptures—John 14:27, Romans 10:9-11; 1 John 5:13 are just a few examples. Jesus has gone to prepare the way for us. Am I prepared to meet him? Do those around me know where my hope is? Am I watching, anticipating, and looking for his appearing? Let us pray that we are. ❑

Pam Gardner is a graduate of Berkshire Christian College. Pam and Mike, her husband, have been in Christian ministry for 14 years, ten of those in ministry to Army families. They now live and minister in Ballwin, Missouri and they are the parents of three teenage daughter. She enjoys writing, reading, and an occasional cross-stitch project.

Tony Campolo

The ACLU Versus Judge Moore

A JUDGE in Alabama stood his ground, and we are all the better for it. He refused to cave in to those who demanded that he remove a plaque that embronzed the Ten Commandments from his courtroom. The ACLU argued that this public display of the Ten Commandments is an infringement on the rights of those outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition. This, contends the ACLU, is a violation of the first amendment of the constitution, which **guarantees** that no religious tradition be given a favored position by power of the state. The ACLU argues that Muslims, Hindus, and peoples of several other religions, could be offended by the practice of displaying the law of God as given to Moses in a government sponsored setting. What the ACLU and other complainers fail to grasp is that America has changed since the 1960's, when the government seemed determined to move religion out of the public sector. Religious people today are organized to give voice to their concerns over the secularization of our society, and they certainly have been organized to support Judge Roy Moore of Alabama. They marched, they demonstrated, and they petitioned on his behalf. And what is more, they are being heard! Whether one is pro or con the Christian Coalition, who have organized the support for this cause, you have to say that all of us who want to keep religious faith at the core of the American psyche should stand behind them as they stand up for Judge Moore.

Secondly, the ACLU may be forgetting that in 1993 Congress passed the Religious Restoration Act. That piece of legislation guarantees that religious practices **cannot** be removed from public settings unless it can be proved that there is a compelling argument that they are detrimental to the well-being of the community good. I think that it will be a hard case to say that the Ten Commandments are a detriment to societal well-being. One of the good things that has come out of the Clinton Administration is the Religious Restoration Act that protects religion against the kind of assault that the ACLU is presently pressing against Judge Moore.

Finally, there is the argument that Judge Moore himself presents. He points out that law in America was built on the morality and value system that was laid down in the Hebrew Bible. To **disconnect** American law from the biblical tradition, according to Judge Moore, would be to undercut the very basis of our entire legal system. To me, that argument seems irrefutable. When all is said and done on this matter, I believe that Judge Moore will be vindicated, and the Supreme Court will allow the Ten Commandments to continue to hang in his courtroom.

This does not mean that those of us who stand with the judge should ignore the call to accommodate those of other religions. Personally, I have no objection to having the basic sayings of morality outlined by the Compassionate Buddha, or the sayings of Confucius hung up alongside the Ten Commandments. As long as these other religious expressions support the law of the land, which in turn is based on the historic laws of Moses, we should be open to them. I do not object to giving equal room to other religions. Such inclusion is required and just in a pluralistic society like ours. But it must be acknowledged by all Americans that there is a common basis for law in America that flows out of biblical morality. It is not that we Christians and Jews want to exclude other religions from public life, but that we object to attempts to secularize our society and exclude religion itself from all but private life.

Civil religion has gotten a bad name as of late. But what every sociologist knows is that the laws of society have **no hold** on people unless those people recognize that the laws are legitimated by a higher authority than the people themselves. It is not just the survival of religion that is at stake in the case of Judge Moore's courtroom. It is the survival of law itself that is at stake. Without a higher authority as a reference for right and wrong, law becomes arbitrary and easily neglected. ❑

Your Servants For Christ's Cause

International Missionaries

India

Barbara White (January 14)
Box 17 Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Marion Damon (March 27)
Box 17 Andivilla
Kodaikanal 624101
INDIA

Philippines

David Vignali (May 10)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Jeff and Penny Vann
(July 14 and May 12)
(Elizabeth, October 24, 1984)
(Connie, March 29, 1988)
(Naomi, October 11, 1990)
P.O. Box 223
9000 Cagayan de Oro
PHILIPPINES

Japan

Steven and Ann Lay
(November 28 and September 13)
(BethAnn, March 26, 1975)
(Timothy, June 18, 1977)
2114 Prairie Rd.
Aurora, IL 60506

New Zealand

Russell and Noelle Carle
(December 30 and December 19)
(Ryan, November 15, 1979)
(Emily, June 23, 1983)
(Peter, August 14, 1991)
11 Rosehill Ave.
Papakura
Auckland 1702
NEW ZEALAND

National Missionaries

Nigeria

A. U. Etuk
Advent Christian Mission, Conf. 2
P. O. Box 101
Etinan, Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

E. H. Ekperikpe
Ukot Udoabia P. A.
Etinan L. G. A.
Akwa Ibom State
NIGERIA

Ghana

Amos W. Gbaa
Contact missions office

Memphis

Francis and Lyne Ssebikindu
(May 13 and May 8)
Faith Nancy (September 28, 1982)
Ashley Grace (November 21, 1985)
Joy Lyne (January 25, 1989)
929 Winchester Road
Memphis, TN 38112

China

Our pastor in China
All correspondence should be channelled through the missions office.

Malaysia

Victor and Nesamony Devadason
Beulah Margaret Devasahayam
30, Jalan Cempaka
Taman Gemira
42700 Banting, Selangor
MALAYSIA

James and Mercy Devadasson
124-A First Floor
Jalan Mersing
86000 Kluang, Johore
MALAYSIA

Ruth Devairakkam
15 Jalan Hang Huah 2/2
Taman Muhibbah
86000 Kluang, Johor
MALAYSIA

Croatia

Desiré Ahola
c/o Advent Christian Croatia Ministry
P.O. Box 29
Nova Gradiska
35400 Croatia

Mexico

Mario and Elena Cortez
Joel and Omega Garcia
Alberto and Fabiola Gomez
c/o Ed Whitford
P.O. Box 1
Tecate, CA 91980-0001

Advent Christian General Conference

David Ross; Executive Director
Pomeroy Carter; Planned Giving
Dwight Carpenter; Student Ministries
John Roller; Urban/Ethnic Ministries
George Teshera; Asia/Pacific Area Director

P. O. Box 23152
Charlotte, NC 28227
704-545-6161
Fax 704-573-0712

Harold Patterson; World Missions
Russell Giasson; Services
Richard Russell; Church Relations
Luree Wotton; Women's Ministries Coordinator

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